

FORMERLY MILITARY COMICS

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MODERN

JANUARY
No. 69

COMICS

10¢

BLACKHAWK
battles MURDER
FROM THE
CLOUDS!





WEB COMIC
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MAKE ME PROVE— I can make YOU COMMANDO -TOUGH

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says *George F. Jowett*
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I'll teach you the "Progressive Power Method" through which I rebuilt myself from a physical wreck the doctors condemned to die at 15, to the holder of more strength records than any other living athlete or teacher! "Progressive Power" has proven its ability to build the strongest, handsomest men in the world. And I stand ready to show you on a money back basis—that no matter how flabby or puny you are I can do the same for you right in your own home. Let me prove I can add inches to your arms, broaden your shoulders, give you a man-sized chest, powerful legs and a Rock-like back—in fact, power pack your whole body so quickly it will amaze you! Through my proven secrets I bring to life new power in you inside and out, until YOU are fully satisfied you are the man you want to be.

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A.
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athlete who was
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for Physical Perfection.



REX
FERRIS
Champion
Strength
Athlete of
South Africa.
Says he: "I
owe every-
thing to
Jowett meth-
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at this chest
—then consider
the value of
the Jowett
Courses!

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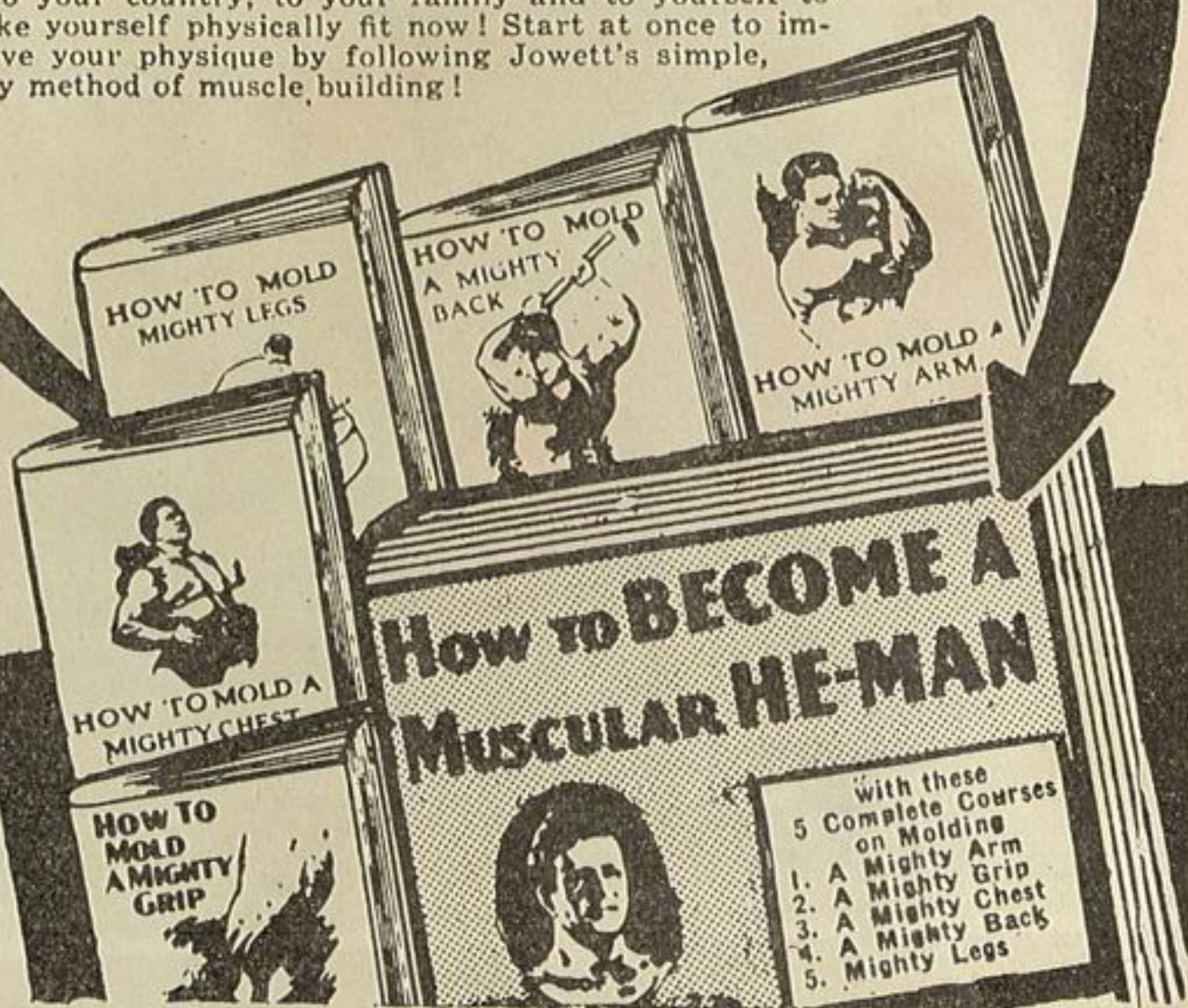
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I am making a drive for thousands of
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Back. 5. Molding Mighty Legs—Now all in One
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MODERN COMICS

BLACKHAWK



This was a death that struck with the speed of light.... a death which fused steel and flesh into liquid substance... and behind it was the warped, twisted brain of a diabolical madman whose hatred of humanity was as consuming and destructive as the weapons he conceived! Against such an enemy the **BLACKHAWKS** unite to stop **MURDER FROM THE CLOUDS!**

WINSTON PERRY
WALPOLE, MASS.

Evening Star

SUPER STRATO-LINER MISSING WITH ALL ABOARD!

HOPE DIMS FOR PASSENGERS AND OFFICIALS OF Trans-Globe Airlines have voiced fears that the huge strato-liner reported missing for the last six hours, has met with the same mysterious fate which has claimed five other sky giants during the past week. Pending investigation by the government, all future flights have been cancelled. It was further stated at the offices of the airline that all planes

IT'S HORRIBLE! OF COURSE, THIS WILL CRUSH MY COMPANY... BUT THAT DOESN'T WORRY ME! I'M THINKING OF THOSE POOR PASSENGERS... HUNDREDS OF THEM!

I UNDERSTAND, MR. GRAYSON! NOW, LET'S SEE... YOU SAY THAT SABOTAGE IS IMPOSSIBLE AND YOU ALSO DISCOUNT FLAWS IN MAINTENANCE! THAT LEAVES ONE OTHER POSSIBILITY!

CAN YOU THINK OF ANY REASON WHY ANYONE SHOULD TRY TO HARM YOU OR YOUR BUSINESS? REVENGE MOTIVE, HATE, JEALOUSY, RIVALRY?

HMM! NO... BUT, WAIT! THERE'S CARNAGE... BUT, NO, NO! HE'S DEAD! I SAW HIM DIE!

MR. GRAYSON, QUICK, SIR! THE CONTROL ROOM'S IN TOUCH WITH THE MISSING PLANE! THEY'RE IN TROUBLE... SIGNALS VERY WEAK!

THANK GOODNESS! MAYBE WE'LL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS, YET! COME ALONG, BLACKHAWK!

TRANSPORT PILOT! TRANSPORT PILOT! THIS IS YOUR HOME TOWER... COME IN, JOHNNY, COME IN! YOU'RE WEAK BUT WE'RE GETTING YOU!

HELLO, TOWER... THIS IS... JOHNNY! CAN'T HOLD OUT! IT'S... MURDERING US! DITCHING SHIP... DITCHING...

YOU'RE WASTING TIME! QUICK... TUNE YOUR DIRECTION FINDERS ON HIS FREQUENCY AND START TAKING A FIX! I'LL TALK TO HIM UNTIL YOU PINPOINT HIS POSITION!

Y-YES, SIR! ROGER!

HELLO... HELLO, JOHNNY... THIS IS THE TOWER! KEEP YOUR WITS, BOY... WE'RE ON YOUR TAIL! JUST KEEP TALKING... SAY ANYTHING! SWITCH YOUR TRANSMITTER TO CONSTANT WAVE AND SCREW DOWN THE KEY! WE'RE FIXING YOU, KID!

HELLO, TOWER! THIS IS... JOHNNY! NO USE! COMPASS HAYWIRE... INSTRUMENT BOARD MELTING! WE'RE... THROUGH... DITCHING!

While on the stricken plane

THERE GOES OUR TRANSMITTER! LOOK, SMITTY... THE PANEL BOARD'S MELTING! CAN'T BUCK HER MUCH LONGER! THEY GOTTA FIX US! THEY GOTTA!

STEWARD! HAVE THE PASSENGERS FASTEN THEIR SAFETY BELTS! WE'RE DITCHING! GET THE DINGHYS READY!

LOOK... QUICK! DOWN THERE! AM I GOING NUTS, SMITTY, OR DO I SEE THE WELCOME MAT OF A GIANT FLAT-TOP?

HEAD'ER DOWN, JOHNNY! WE'LL WALK AWAY FROM THIS ONE YET!

WE MADE IT JUST IN TIME, SMITTY! LOOK, THE INBOARD ENGINES ARE MELTED TO A MASS OF SLAG!

THE HECK WITH THE ENGINES! I WANNA KNOW WHERE THIS FLOATING DRY-DOCK AND LANDING FIELD CAME FROM!

HURRY, YOU FOOLS! GET THE SHEEP BELOW DECKS! WE CAN'T STAY SURFACED LIKE THIS TOO LONG!

GET A MOVE ON! MOVE ALONG! MOVE... YOU *!!#*!!*!!

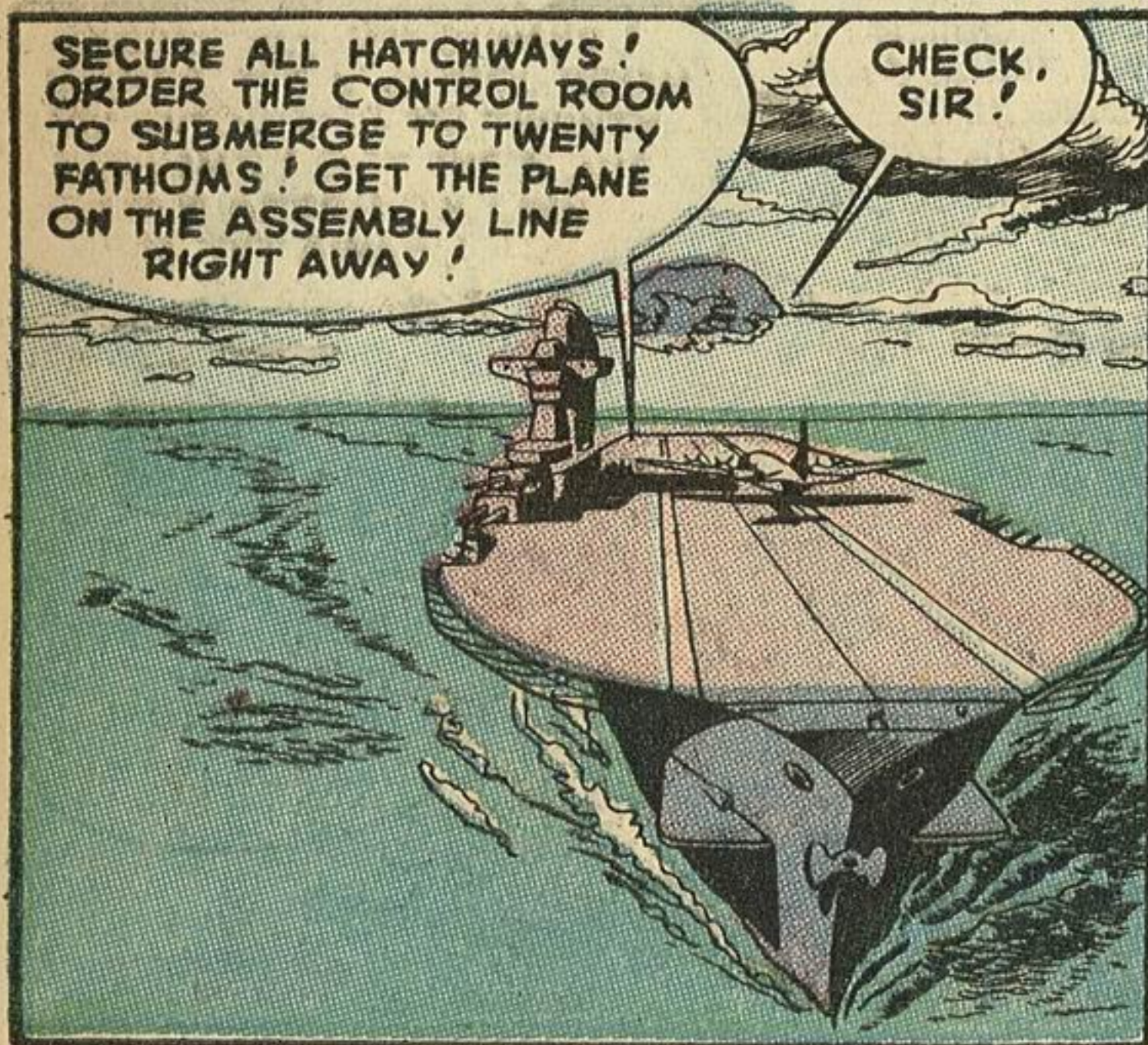
PILOT AND CO-PILOT, I PRESUME! NICE LANDING FOR A LAND-TRAINED MAN!

NEVER MIND THE COMPLIMENTS! WHAT KIND OF A DEAL IS THIS? WHAT'S THE IDEA OF THE ROUGH STUFF WITH MY PASSENGERS?

SWINE! AROUND HERE I ASK THE QUESTIONS! THROW THEM OVERBOARD AND PREPARE TO SUBMERGE, MEN!

D-DIRTY R-RAT! S'LONG, SMITTY... OHHHH!

BANG BANG



SECURE ALL HATCHWAYS!
ORDER THE CONTROL ROOM
TO SUBMERGE TO TWENTY
FATHOMS! GET THE PLANE
ON THE ASSEMBLY LINE
RIGHT AWAY!

CHECK,
SIR!

Later... at secret headquarters on
Blackhawk Island....

SACRE BLEU!
WHAT YOU SAY
EES UNCANNY!
HOW... WHAT...
WHY?

I'VE CHECKED
EVERY CONCEIVABLE
ANGLE FOR THE ANSWER,
TO NO AVAIL! WE PLOTTED
THE LAST POSITION OF
THE PLANE WITH DIRECT-
ION FINDERS, AND THAT'S
ALL WE'VE GOT TO
GO BY!



P-PLEASE HELP
ME! I'M... PAMELA
GRAYSON! THEY'VE
KILLED MY FATHER...
AND NOW... THEY'RE
AFTER ME!

GRAB HER,
QUICK! SHE'S
GOING TO
FAINT!



LOOK! DER
POOR GIRL
ISS COMING
TO! GIFF
HER AIR!

I SWEAR...
IT WAS
CARNAGE!
BUT HE'S
DEAD... I
KNOW IT!
OHHH!
POOR
DAD!



HEY!
ALLEE
LIGHTS
GO
OUT!

HENDRICKSON...
GUARD THE
GIRL! ANDRE,
GET TO THAT
DOOR! THEY
MUST BE
AFTER HER!



DER GIRL
ISS GONE!

MA FOI! EES THEES A
GHOST WE BATTLE? I
HEARD NOTHING! NOT
A STRANGE FOOTSTEP...
NOT A SOUND!



I BAN GAT MY HANDS
ON THUG AND SQUASH
HIS HEAD LIKE
TOMATO!

WAIT! THEY'VE
WON THE FIRST
ROUND... BUT WE
HAVEN'T BEGUN
TO FIGHT YET!
THIS GIVES YOU
AN IDEA OF THE
ENEMY WE'RE
UP AGAINST!

I'M TAKING OFF, MEN! THERE'S NO TIME TO LOSE! THERE'LL BE AN AUTOMATIC CW SIGNAL FLASHED AT REGULAR INTERVALS FROM MY TRANSMITTER! YOU CAN PLOT MY POSITION ANYTIME IN THAT WAY!

AU REVOIR, MON AMI! WE SHALL BE AT YOUR HEEL EEF YOU ARE IN NEED!

Soon, in a cabin of the mystery ship--

RADIO ROOM CALLING, SIR! WE'VE JUST PICKED UP AN UNIDENTIFIED PLANE ON THE RADAR SCREEN! HEADED THIS WAY---APPROXIMATE SPEED, 300 M.P.H.! ANY ORDERS, SIR?

USE THE NEUTRON RAY TO KNOCK OUT HIS TRANSMITTER! ORDER THE CONTROL ROOM TO SURFACE AND HAVE A FIGHTER READY FOR ME!

A FRIEND OF YOURS BY THE NAME OF BLACKHAWK! PERHAPS HE IS ANGRY THAT MY MEN SO ADROITLY STOLE YOU FROM HIM! IT WILL BE A PLEASURE TO ESCORT HIM...TO HIS DEATH!

YOU MURDERING BEAST! YOU'LL RUE THE DAY YOU HARM HIM!

SO FAR, NOT A CLUE! NO WRECKAGE, NO SIGN OF... WH...? AN OIL SLICK ON THE WATER, OR I MISS MY GUESS!

GOOD GRIEF! THAT RAY...IT MELTED MY TRANSMITTER TO NOTHING!

BLACKHAWK, AN EXPERIENCED COMBAT PILOT HAS EYES IN THE BACK OF HIS HEAD! TURN AROUND, MY FRIEND!

A JET JOB! I CAN TURN INSIDE HIM BUT HE'LL GET ME ON THE STRAIGHT-AWAY!

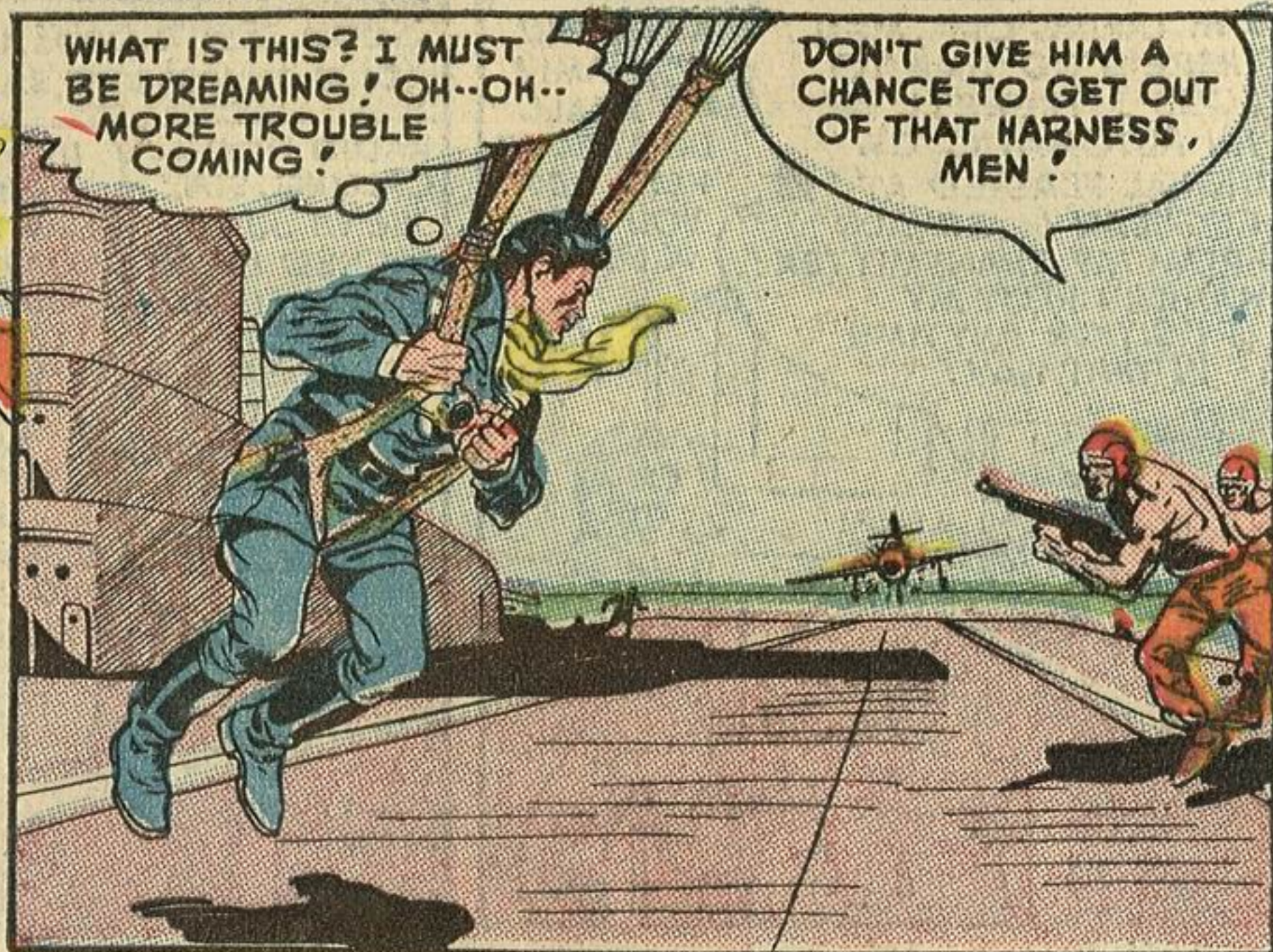
NICE WORK, BLACKHAWK! HOWEVER, YOU CAN'T GET AWAY FOR LONG! I DON'T USE BULLETS AND I HAVEN'T AN OPTICAL SIGHT! JUST A SET OF BUTTONS WITH WHICH I INTEND TO CUT YOU TO RIBBONS!

LIKE IT, BLACKHAWK? THIS SHOULD DISINTEGRATE YOUR PANEL BOARD AND MAKE A GREASE SPOT OUT OF YOUR ENGINE!

I KNOW YOU CAN'T HEAR ME, MR. WHOEVER-YOU-ARE, BUT I HAVE A FEELING WE'LL MEET AGAIN, FACE TO FACE! THEN, LOOK OUT!



YOU'RE RAT ENOUGH TO TAKE ANOTHER SHOT AT ME WHEN I HIT THE WATER... BUT I STILL THINK WE'LL MEET AGAIN!



WHAT IS THIS? I MUST BE DREAMING! OH-OH... MORE TROUBLE COMING!

DON'T GIVE HIM A CHANCE TO GET OUT OF THAT HARNESS, MEN!



I'LL LIVE TO PAY THIS BACK, YOU... UGH!

TAKE HIM BELOW AND PREPARE TO SUBMERGE! I HAVE PLANS FOR OUR LUCKY FRIEND! HE'S TOO GOOD A PILOT TO KILL LIKE THE OTHERS!



While, back on Blackhawk Island..

SIGNAL STOP ALLEE SUDDEN! BLACKHAWK IN TROUBLE!

HERE'S HIS LAST POSITION... JUST ABOUT WHERE THE STRATO-LINER WAS HEARD FROM LAST! LET'S GO, MEN!



What fate awaits Blackhawk?

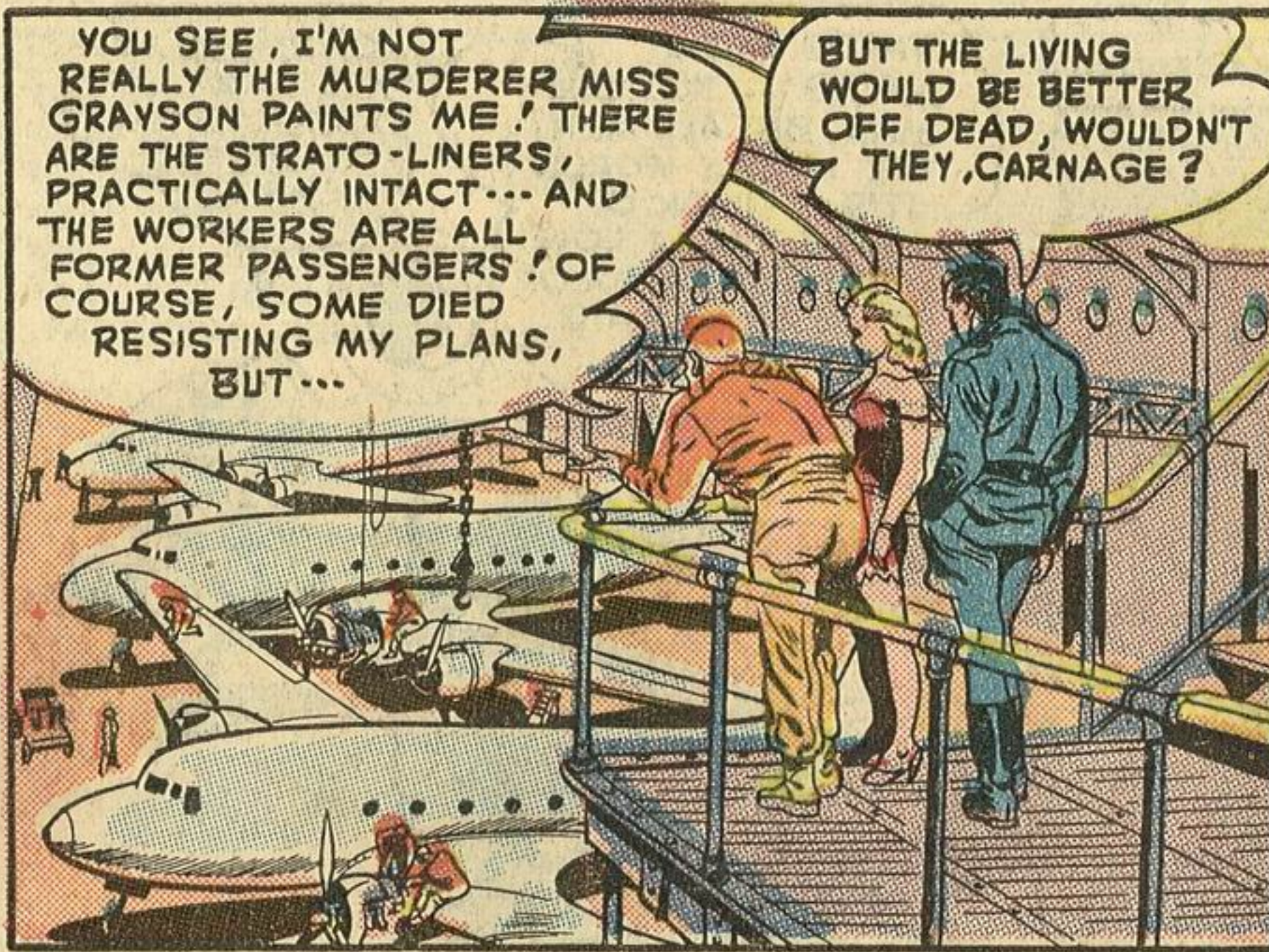
BEFORE I MEET THE DOOM YOU'VE PROMISED ME, I'D APPRECIATE BEING BROUGHT UP TO DATE ON A FEW THINGS, MR. CARNAGE!

YOU'RE SHREWD ENOUGH TO GUESS WHO I AM, EH? WELL, I'VE DECIDED TO POST-PONE YOUR FATE FOR A SHORT TIME, PENDING DISCUSSION OF A LITTLE PLAN I'VE CONCEIVED!



THIS LITTLE TOUR OF CARNAGE'S MURDER FACTORY IS FIRST ON THE LIST FOR ALL VISITING TOURISTS!

TUT TUT, MISS GRAYSON! YOU MUST EXCUSE HER, BLACKHAWK! SHE'S A BIT PEEVED BECAUSE I KILLED HER FATHER AND KIDNAPPED HER!



Somehow... I don't know how... I landed my own pyre...

I'LL COME BACK, GRAYSON! I'LL COME BACK... OHHH... MY EYES!

THAT'S WHY I HATE.... NOT ONE MAN, BUT ALL MEN... THE WHOLE WORLD! IT'S A QUIRK OF FATE THAT I LOVE THE DAUGHTER OF THE MAN I HATE MOST!

OH, NO! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT... I JUST CAN'T!

BEFORE WE DISCUSS FUTURE STRATEGY, I'D LIKE YOU TO SEE MY LABORATORIES! IN SOME RESPECTS, WE'RE FIVE YEARS AHEAD OF THE REST OF WORLD SCIENCE, YOU KNOW!

YOUR FLOATING EMPIRE INTRIGUES ME, CARNAGE!

WE'VE DEVELOPED VARIOUS RAYS THAT LEAD THE FIELD IN ELECTRONICS... RAYS THAT CAN PULVERIZE A CRUISER AT TWENTY-FIVE MILES... RAYS THAT CAN PENETRATE WALLS OF LEAD AND FUSE ALL MATTER INTO DUST!

I BELIEVE YOU! I SAW A SAMPLE IN MY OWN PLANE! VERY INTERESTING!

BLACKHAWK, I OFFER YOU HALF A WORLD! I GIVE YOU LEADERSHIP OF THE GREATEST ARMADA OF SUPER-BOMBERS MAN HAS EVER SEEN... A ROBOT FLEET WHICH WILL CRUSH TO A PULP ANY RESISTANCE OFFERED!

IT'S A BIG OFFER! I'LL HAVE TO THINK IT OVER!

YOU TRAITOR! EVEN IF THIS BEAST HAS CAUSE TO HATE MY FATHER, HOW CAN YOU HESITATE TO REFUSE THE DIABOLICAL PARTNERSHIP HE OFFERS?

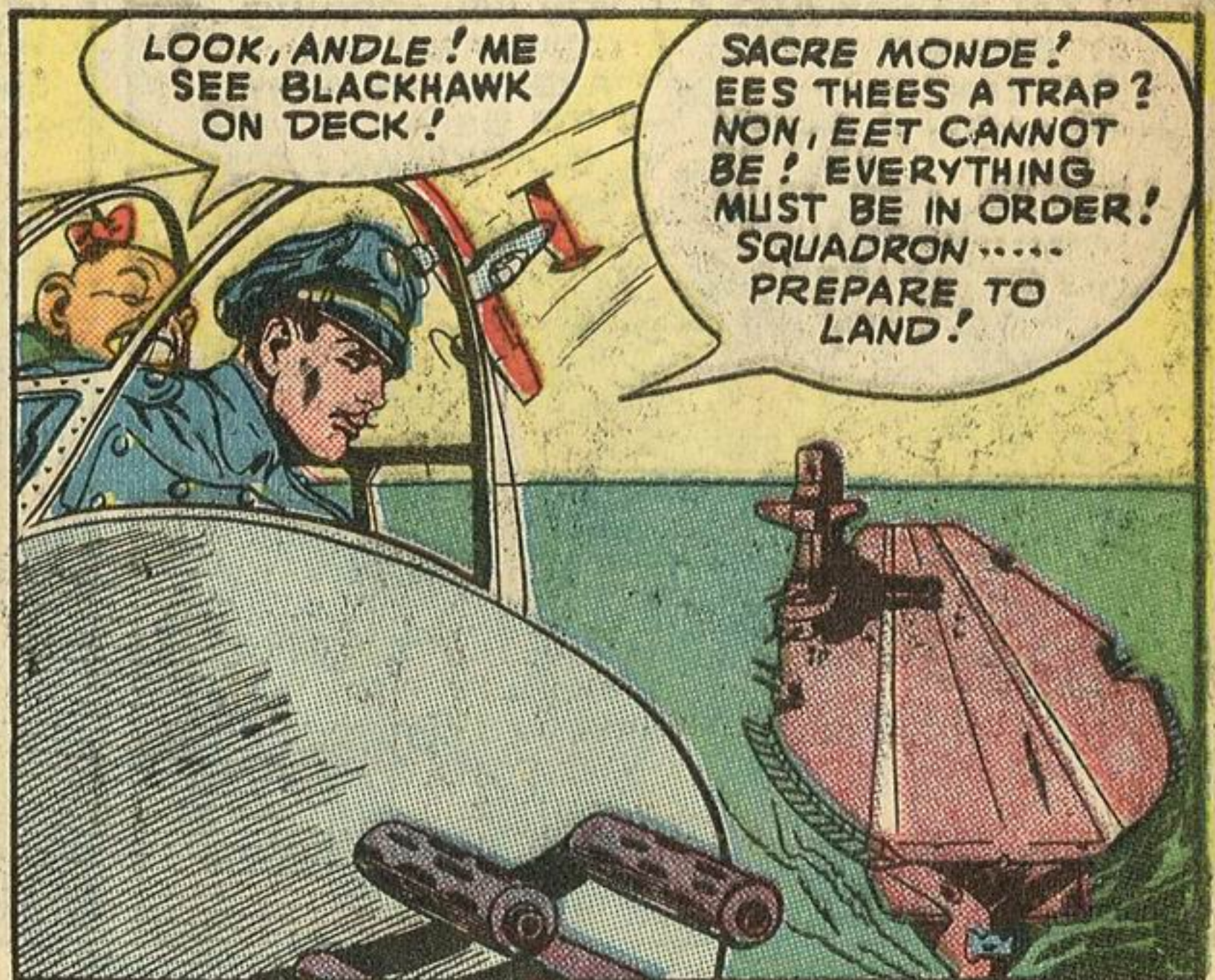
VERY DRAMATIC, MY DEAR PAM! I'M SURE BLACK-HAWK CAN MAKE UP HIS OWN MIND, WITHOUT BEING PREJUDICED BY YOUR HYSTERICS!

COMMUNICATIONS CALLING, SIR! SQUADRON OF FIVE FIGHTERS INTERCEPTED ON OUR RADAR SCREEN... HEADED THIS WAY! ANY ORDERS?

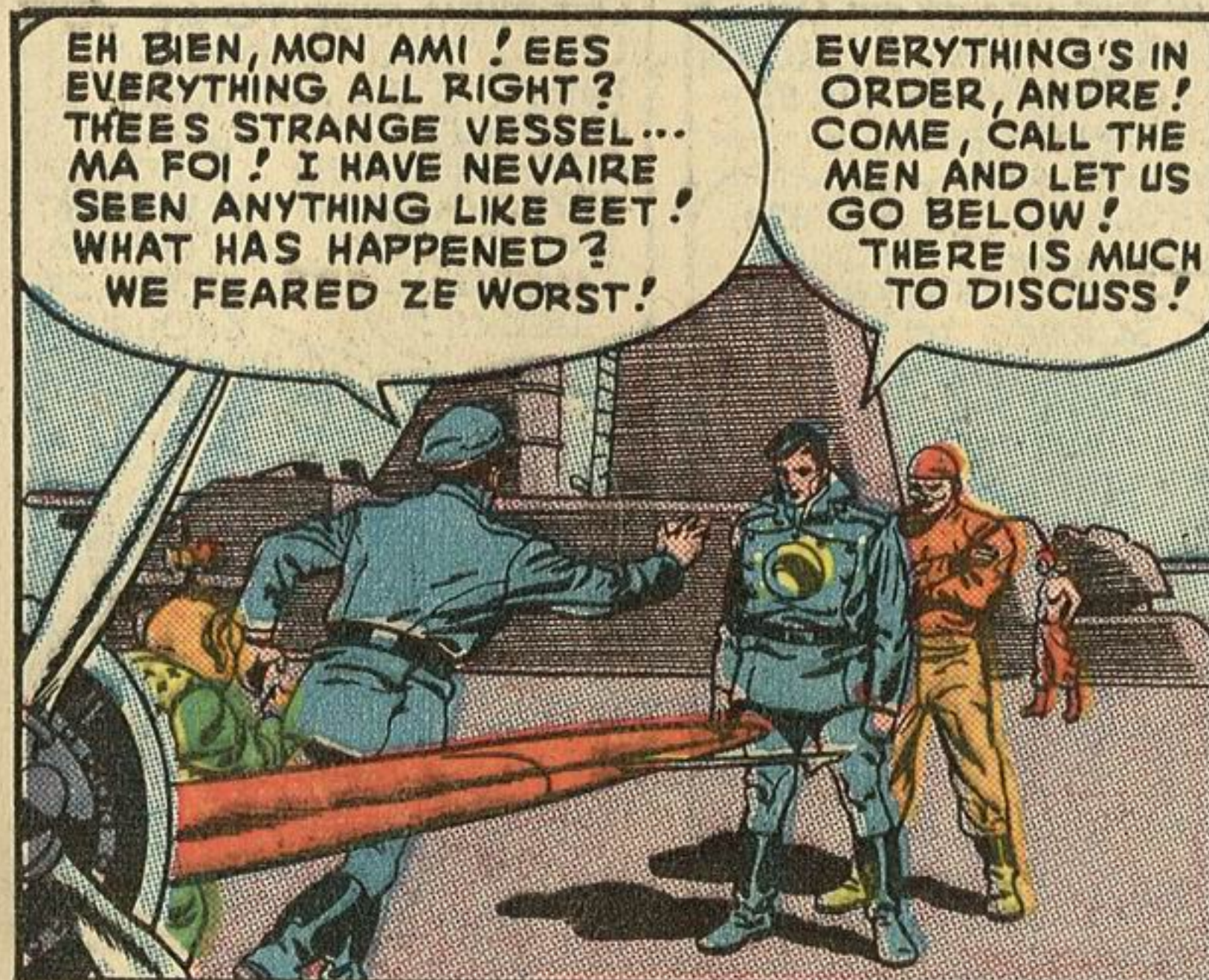
GOOD! THAT MUST BE MY OUTFIT! LET THEM LAND, CARNAGE! I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS YOUR PLAN WITH THEM!



ORDERS RECEIVED! CHECK, SIR!



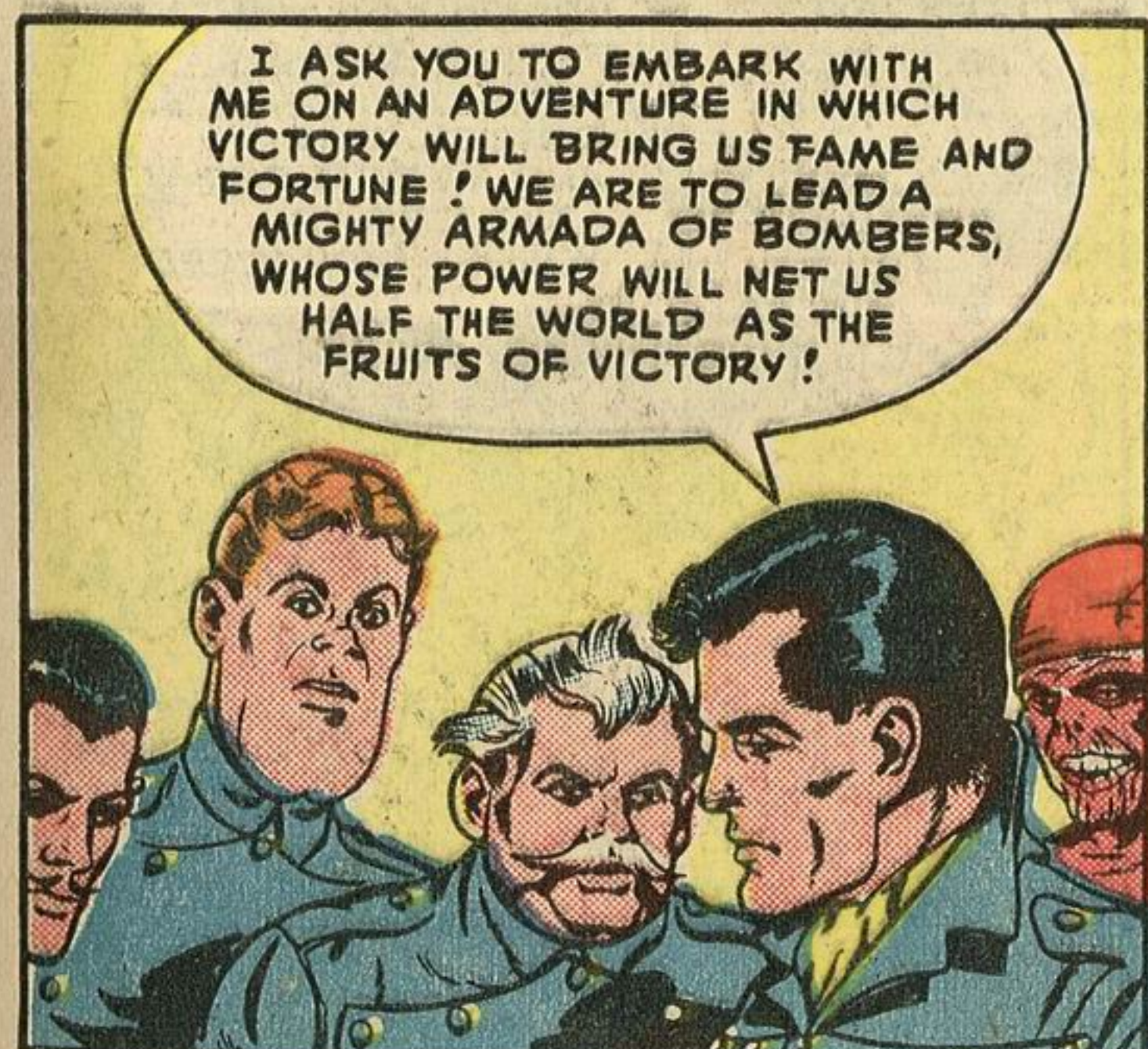
SACRE MONDE! EES THEES A TRAP? NON, EET CANNOT BE! EVERYTHING MUST BE IN ORDER! SQUADRON..... PREPARE TO LAND!



EH BIEN, MON AMI! EES EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT? THEES STRANGE VESSEL... MA FOI! I HAVE NEVAIRE SEEN ANYTHING LIKE EET! WHAT HAS HAPPENED? WE FEARED ZE WORST!



DERE ISS NO QUESTION OF DAT! VAT MUST VE DO, BLACKHAWK?

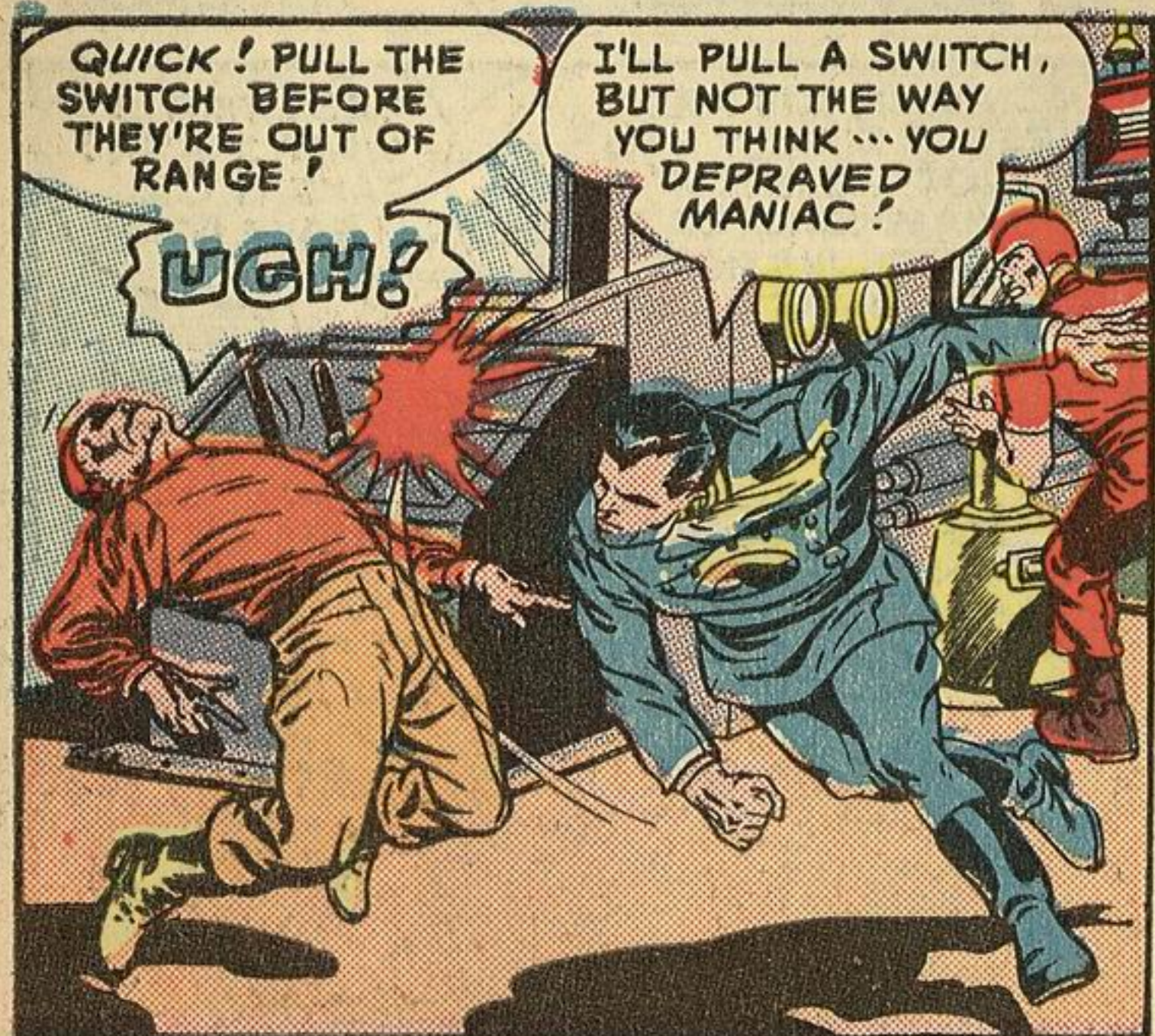


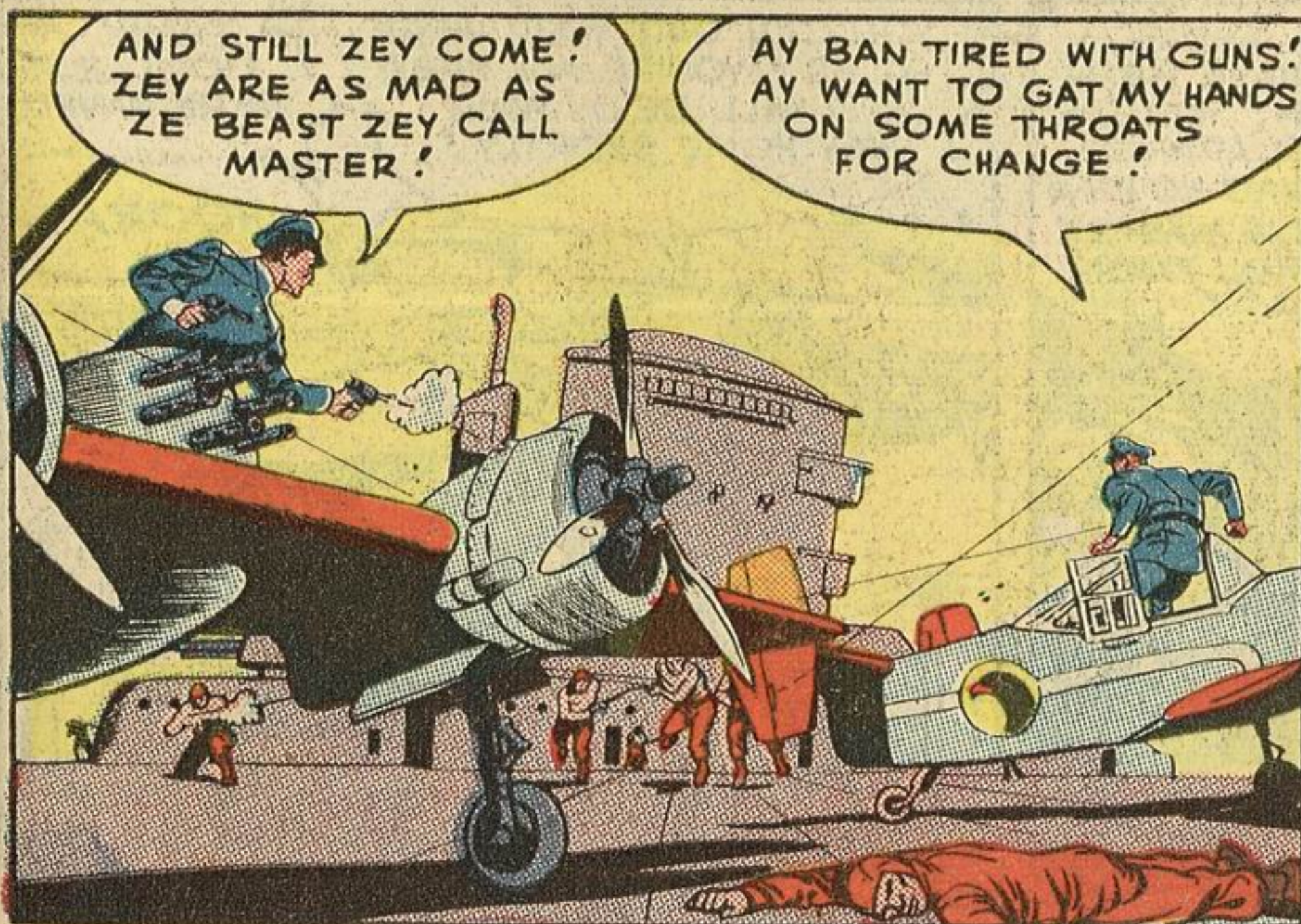
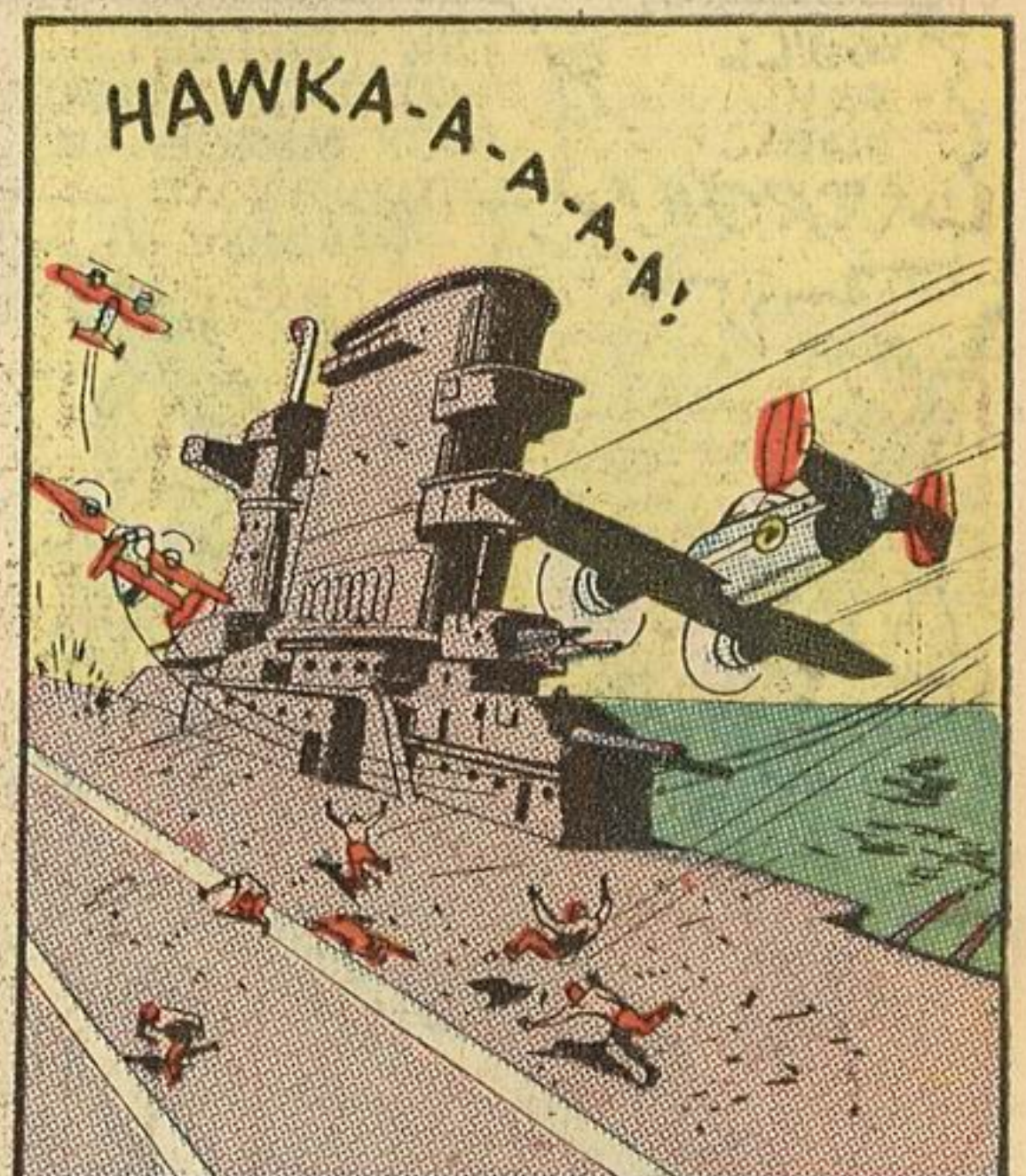
I ASK YOU TO EMBARK WITH ME ON AN ADVENTURE IN WHICH VICTORY WILL BRING US FAME AND FORTUNE! WE ARE TO LEAD A MIGHTY ARMADA OF BOMBERS, WHOSE POWER WILL NET US HALF THE WORLD AS THE FRUITS OF VICTORY!



MON AMI, YOU ARE TIRED! SURELY YOU CANNOT MEAN ZAT WE, ZE CHAMPIONS OF FREEDOM AND JUSTICE, ARE TO JOIN FORCES WITH A MURDERING MADMAN SUCH AS THEES CARNAGE? SAY NO, MON AMI!

YES! THAT'S WHAT I ASK! TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT!







True to his word

THEY'RE A HAPPY BUNCH, NOW! TOO BAD WE CAN'T BRING THE CREWS OF THOSE SHIPS BACK WITH US! MAY THEY REST IN PEACE!

WE'VE ROUNDED UP THE REST OF CARNAGE'S GANG, BUT WE CAN'T FIND CARNAGE!



MEN, I WANT EACH OF YOU TO TAKE THE CONTROLS OF ONE OF THESE BOMBERS! YOUR OWN PLANES WILL BE REPLACED! I'LL HAVE TO GO BELOW AND FIND CARNAGE!

MAIS NON! NOT ALONE!

ZAT CARNAGE IS WILY AS LE DIABLE HEEM-SELF!



WHERE ARE YOU, BLACKHAWK? I KNOW YOU'RE NEAR ME... BUT WHERE? LEAVE QUICKLY... I'VE WIRED THE CONTROLS TO BLOW UP SIMULTANEOUSLY!

I THOUGHT I COULD SAVE YOU, CARNAGE... BUT YOU WOULD ONLY HAVE MET DEATH IN ANOTHER WAY!



I LIVED VIOLENTLY, AND SO I PREFER TO DIE! FLAMES LED MY FOOTSTEPS TO THIS LIFE... AND NOW BY FLAMES, I DIE! GO!

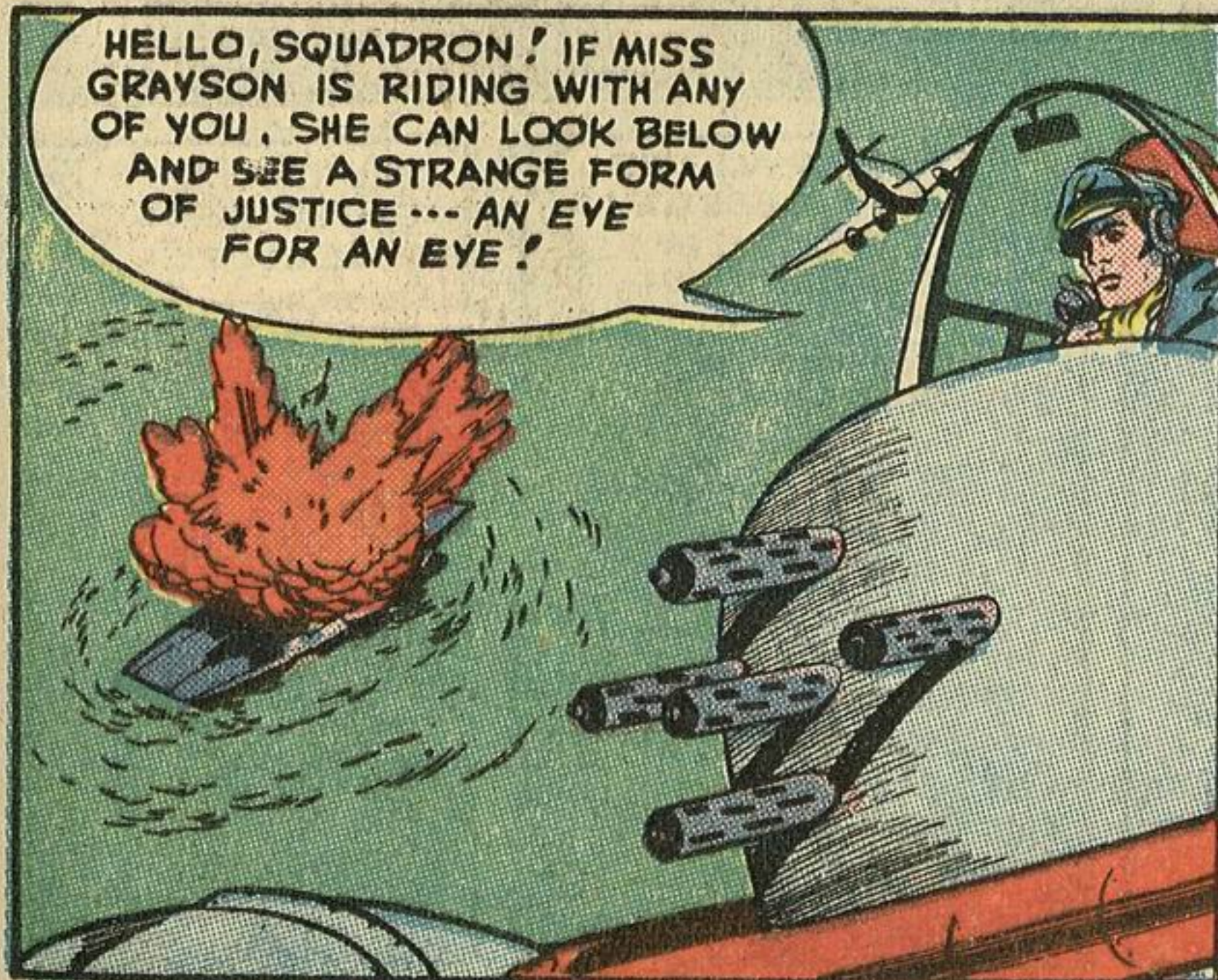
SO BE IT, CARNAGE! WHO KNOWS BUT THIS WAY IS BETTER? GOODBYE!



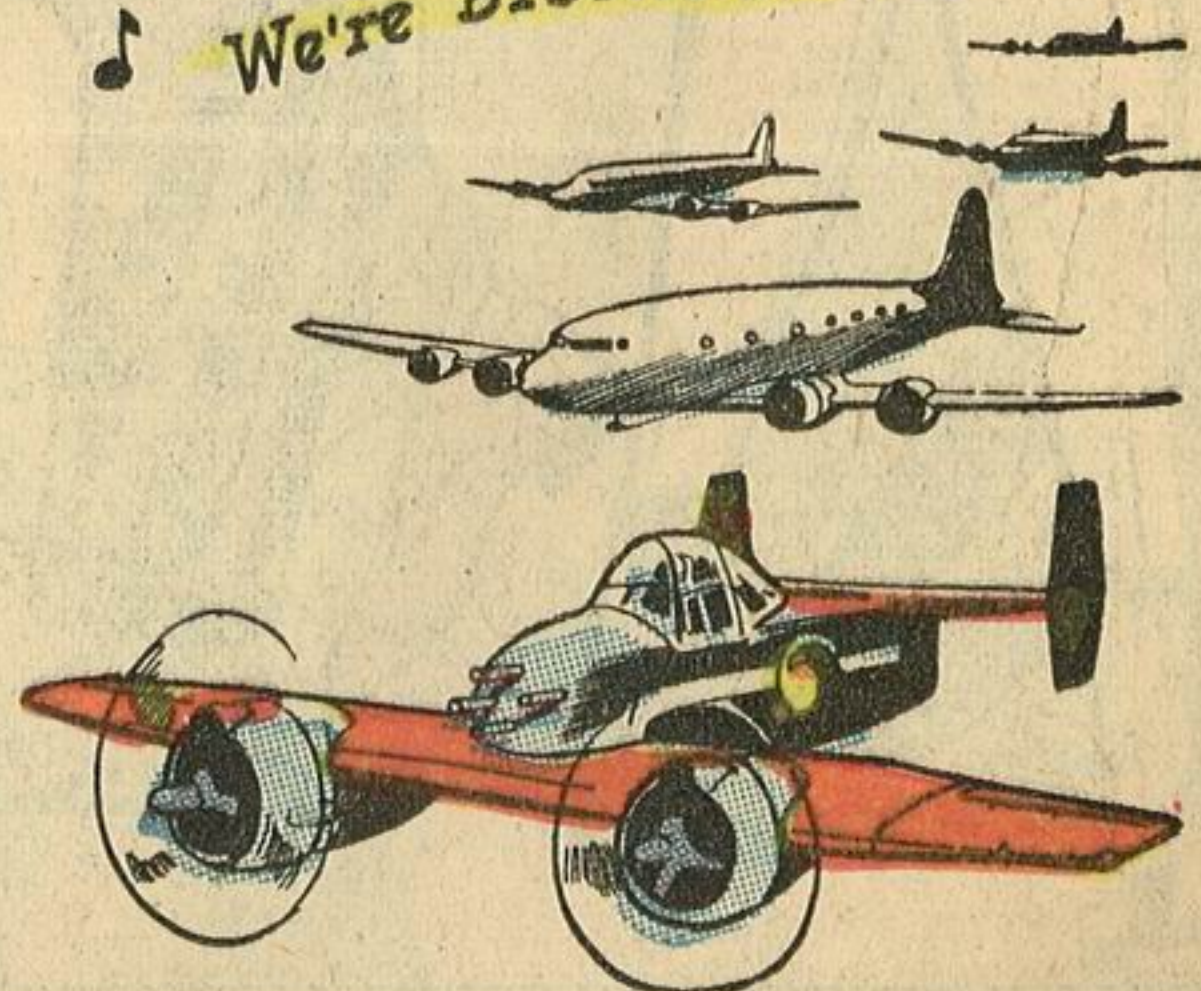
I CAN'T FEEL SORRY FOR CARNAGE! HE TRIED TO RIGHT A WRONG BY COMMITTING GREATER WRONGS! IN HIS WARPED, TWISTED BRAIN, HE FORSOOK LAW AND JUSTICE FOR VIOLENCE AND GREED!



HELLO, SQUADRON! IF MISS GRAYSON IS RIDING WITH ANY OF YOU, SHE CAN LOOK BELOW AND SEE A STRANGE FORM OF JUSTICE... AN EYE FOR AN EYE!



In the thick of the melee
We fight to make men
free,
We're Blackhawks!



TORCHY

WATCH
YOUR
HAT!

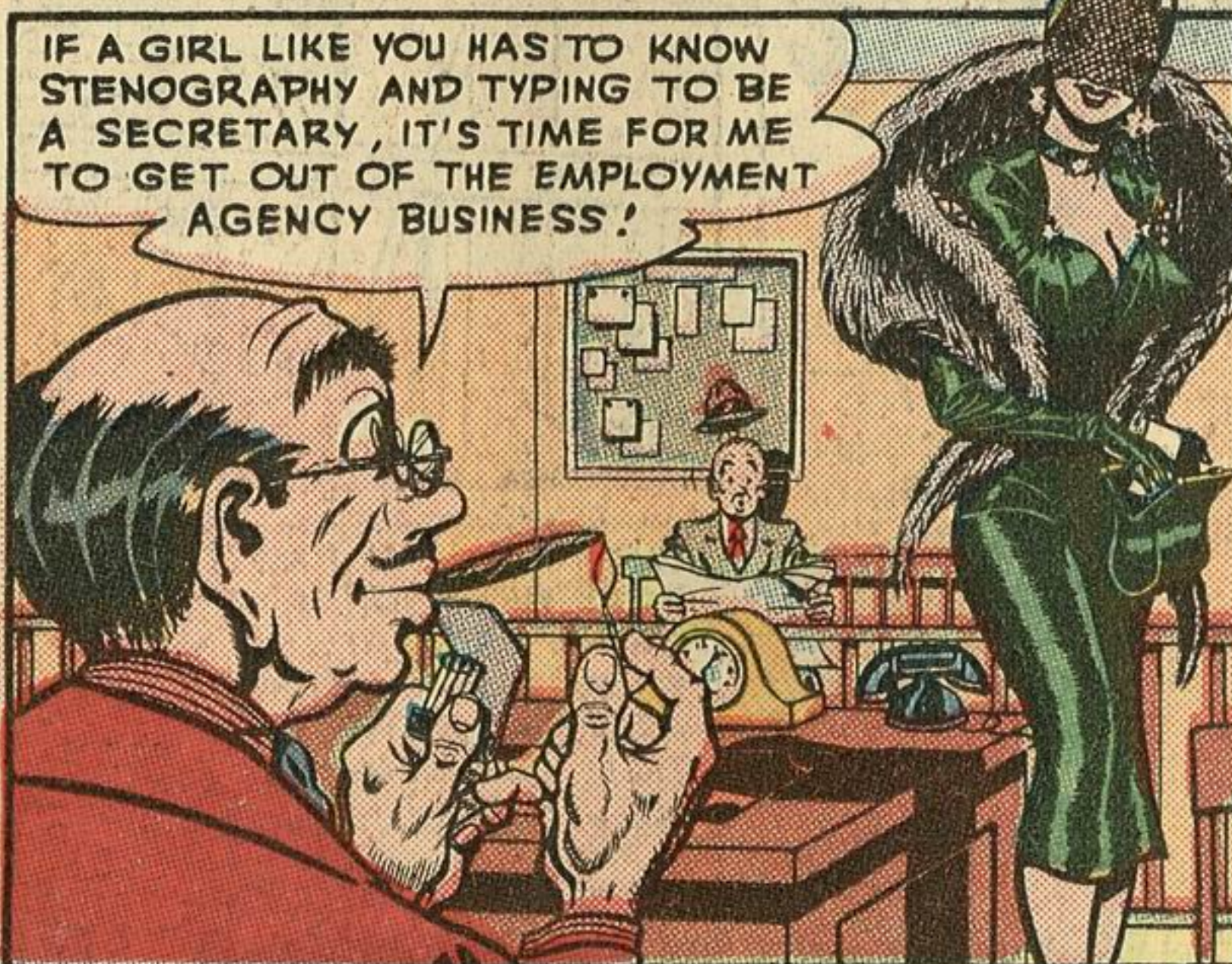
TAKE A MEMO,
MISS TODD!
"MAKE CELLS
MORE HOMELIKE!"

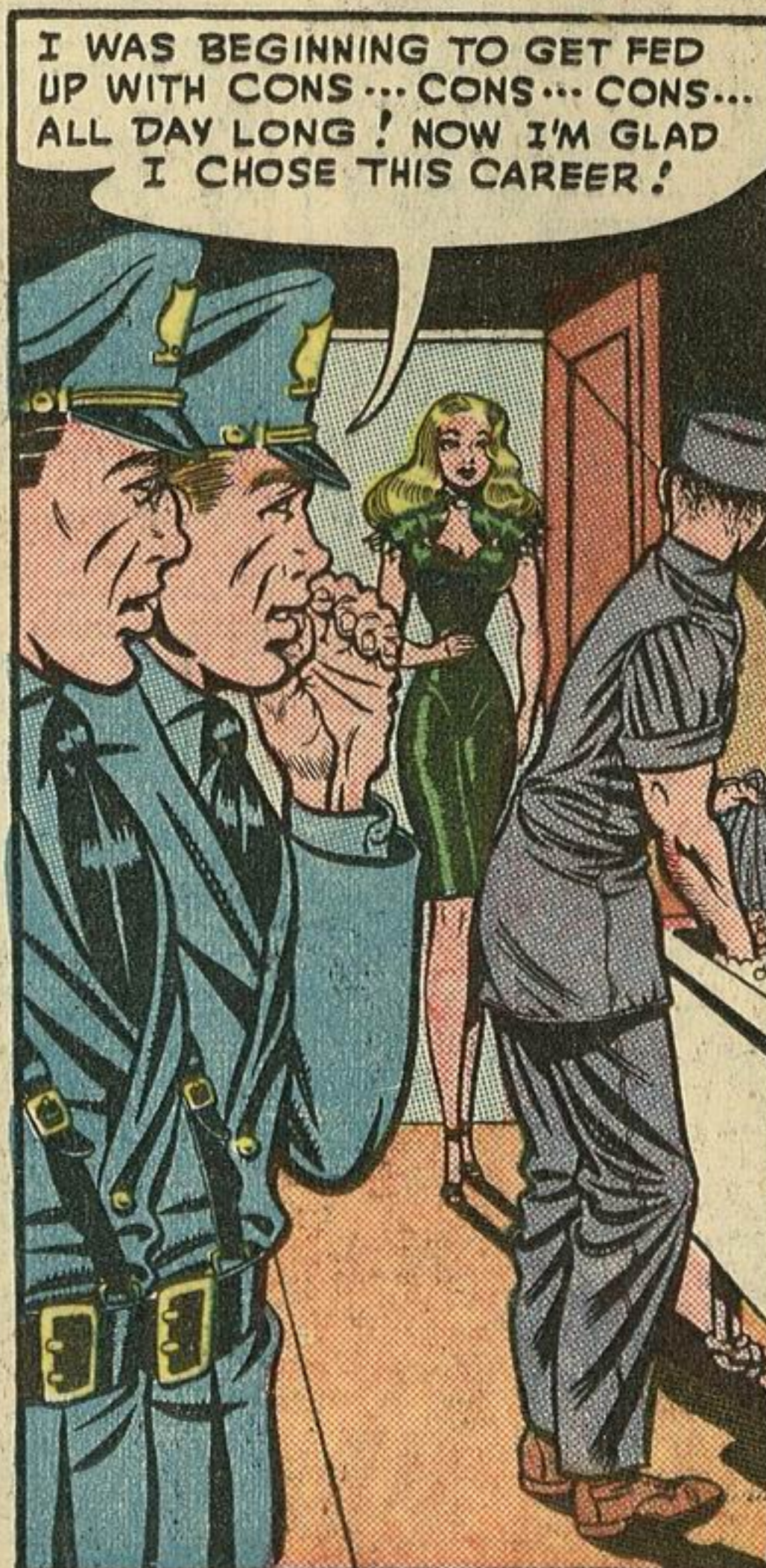
HOME WAS
NEVER LIKE
THIS!

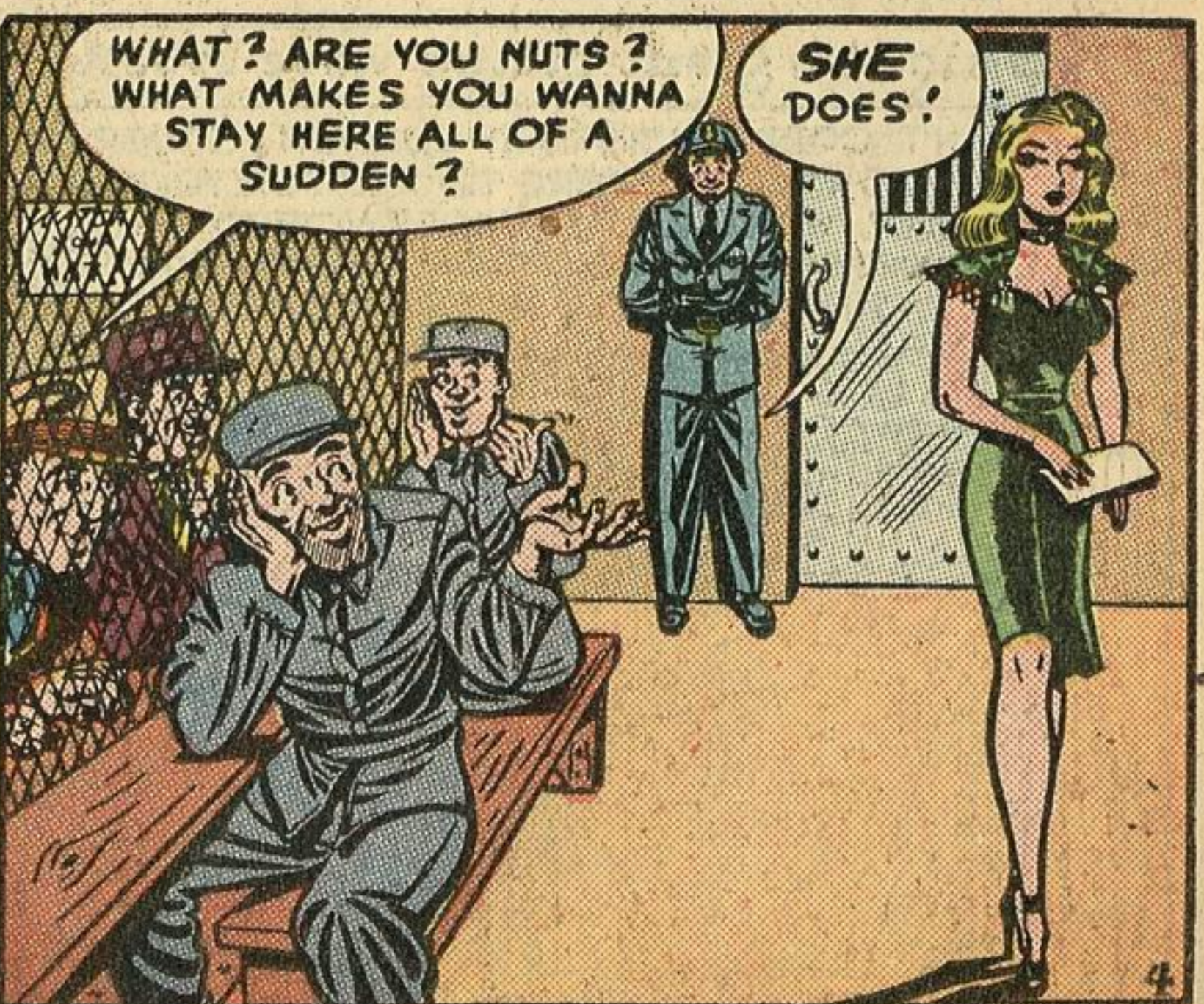
I'M TIRED OF ALL THIS
HUSTLE AND BUSTLE! I
WISH I COULD GET A
JOB IN A NICE QUIET
ATMOSPHERE
SOMETHING
DIFFERENT!

I'LL TRY THE
EMPLOYMENT
AGENCY!

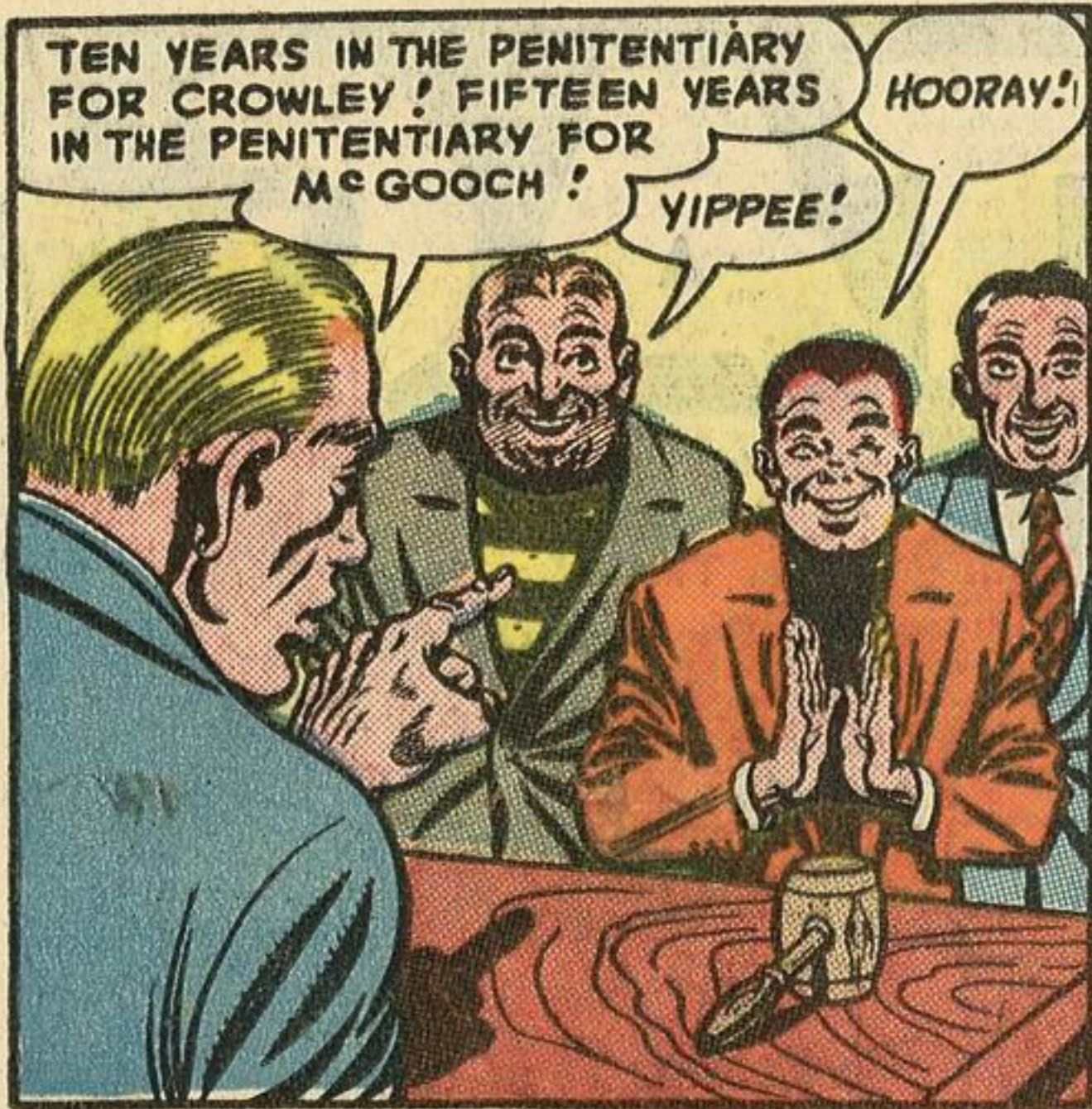
EMPLOY



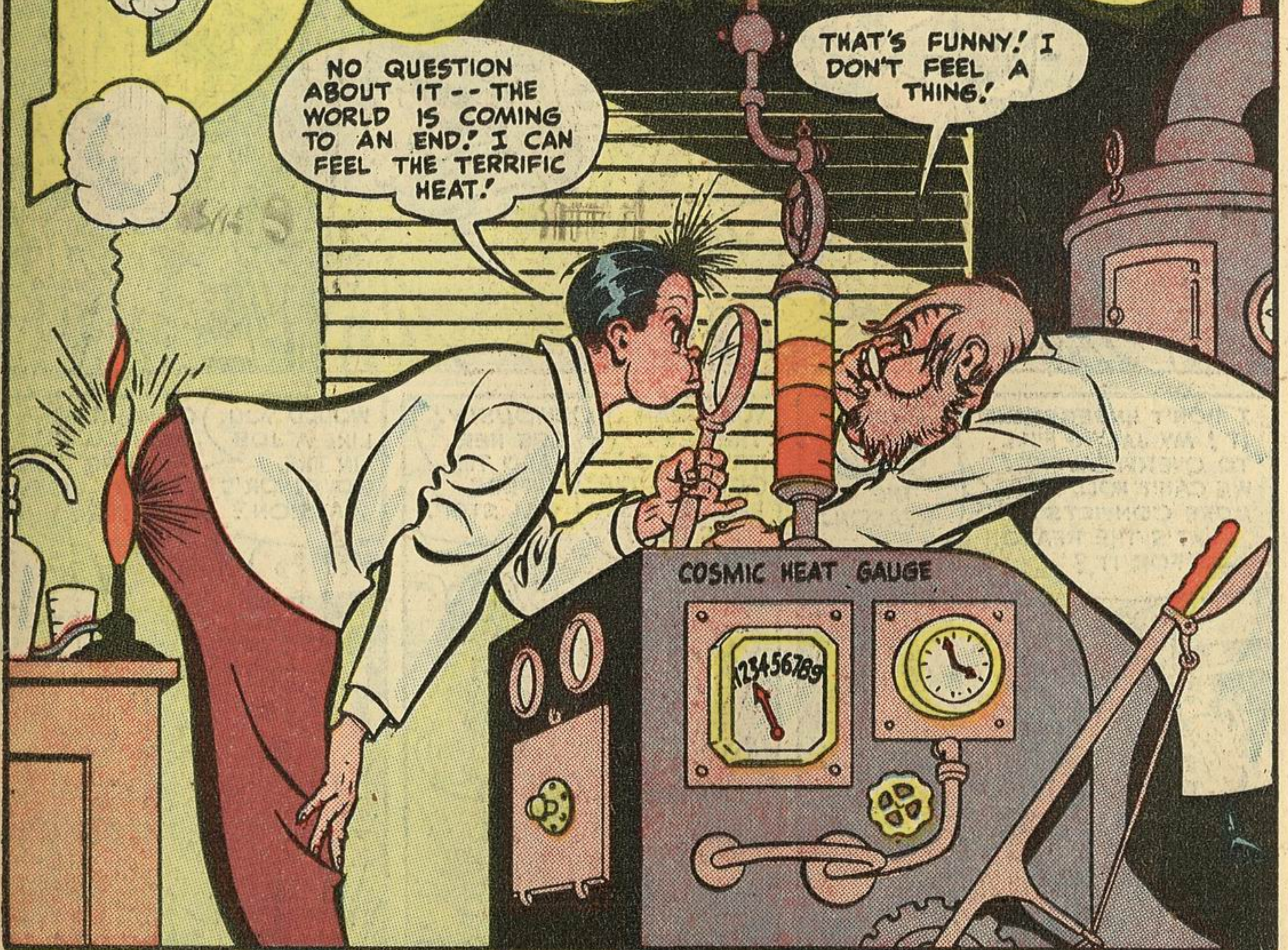


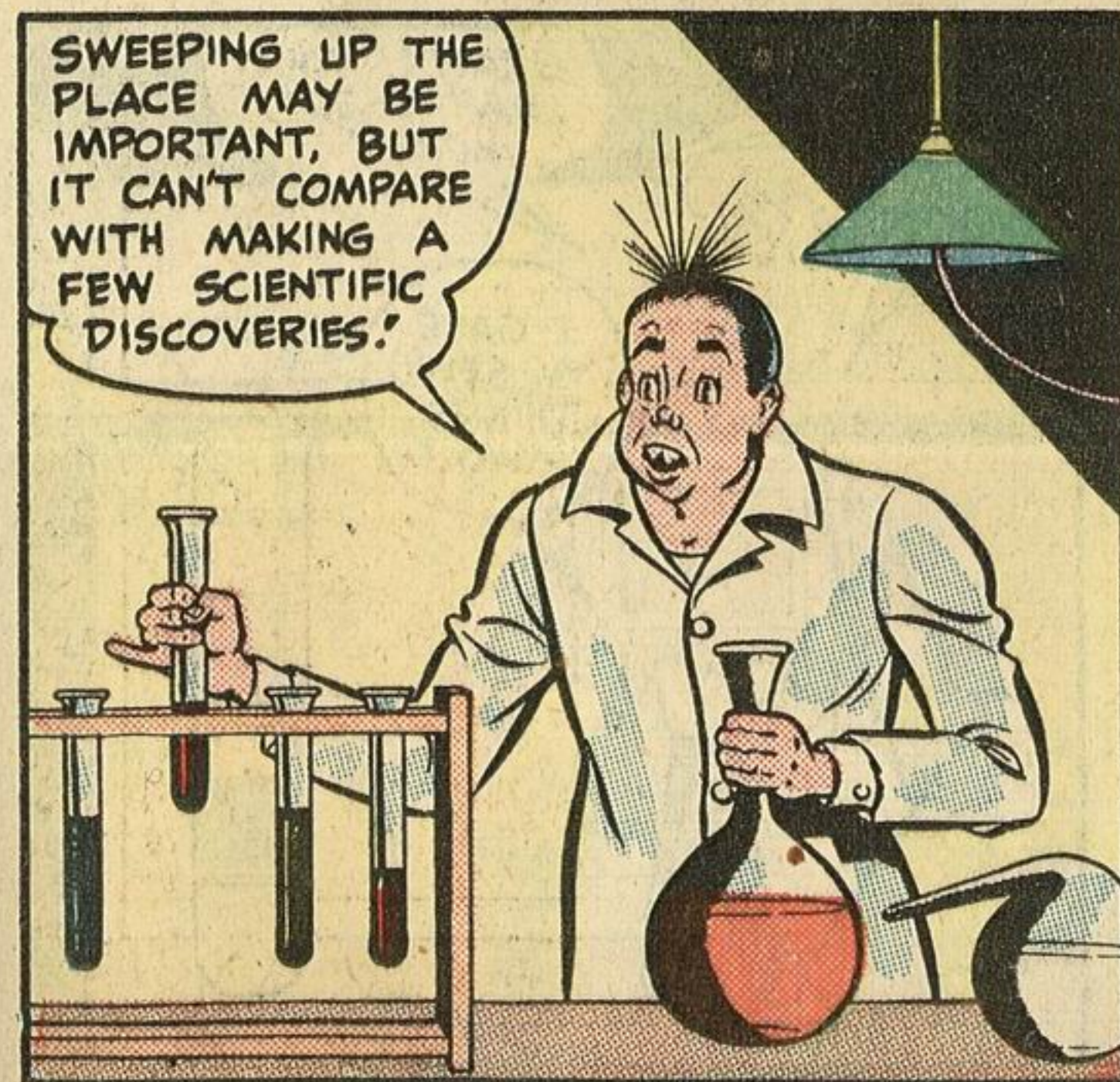
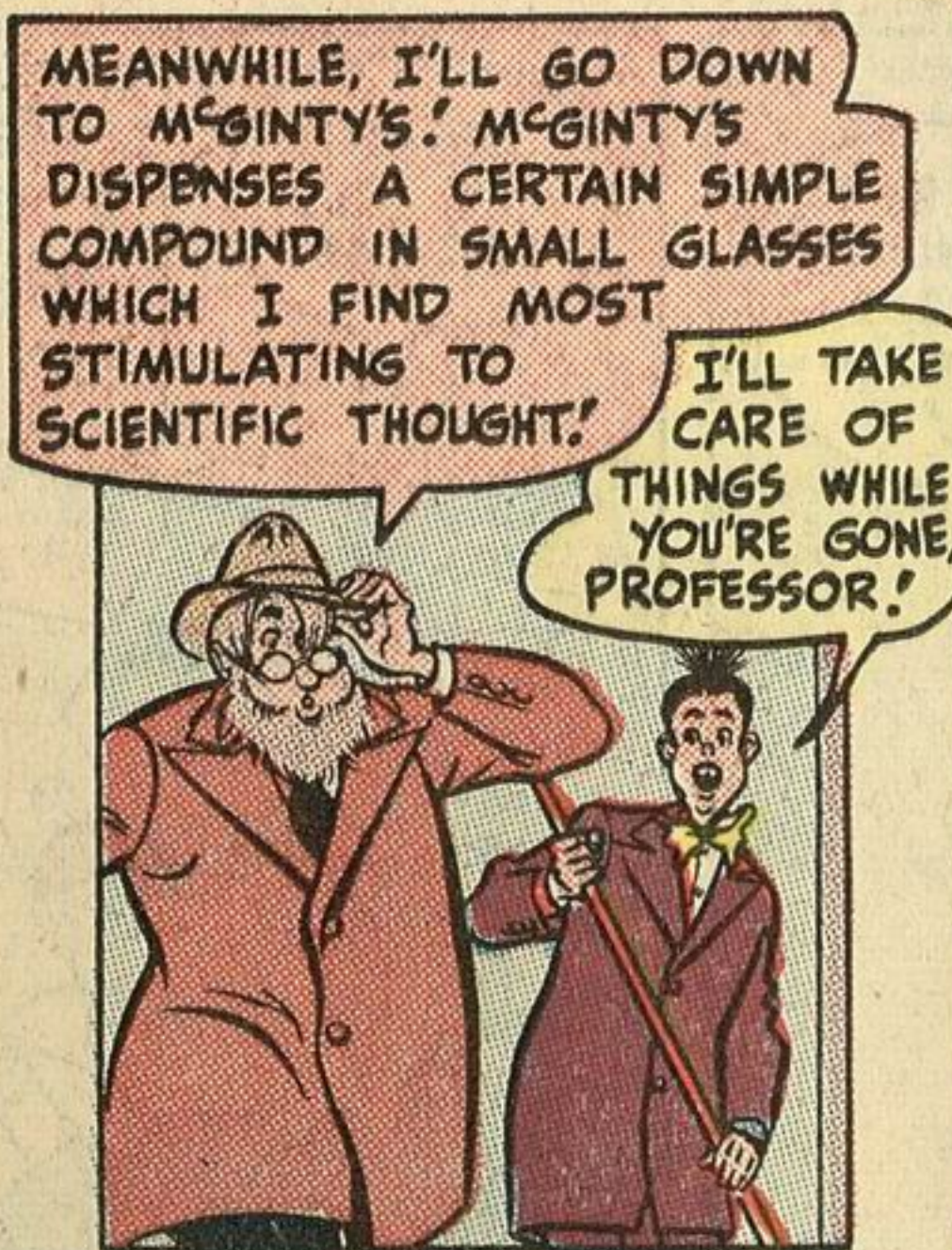


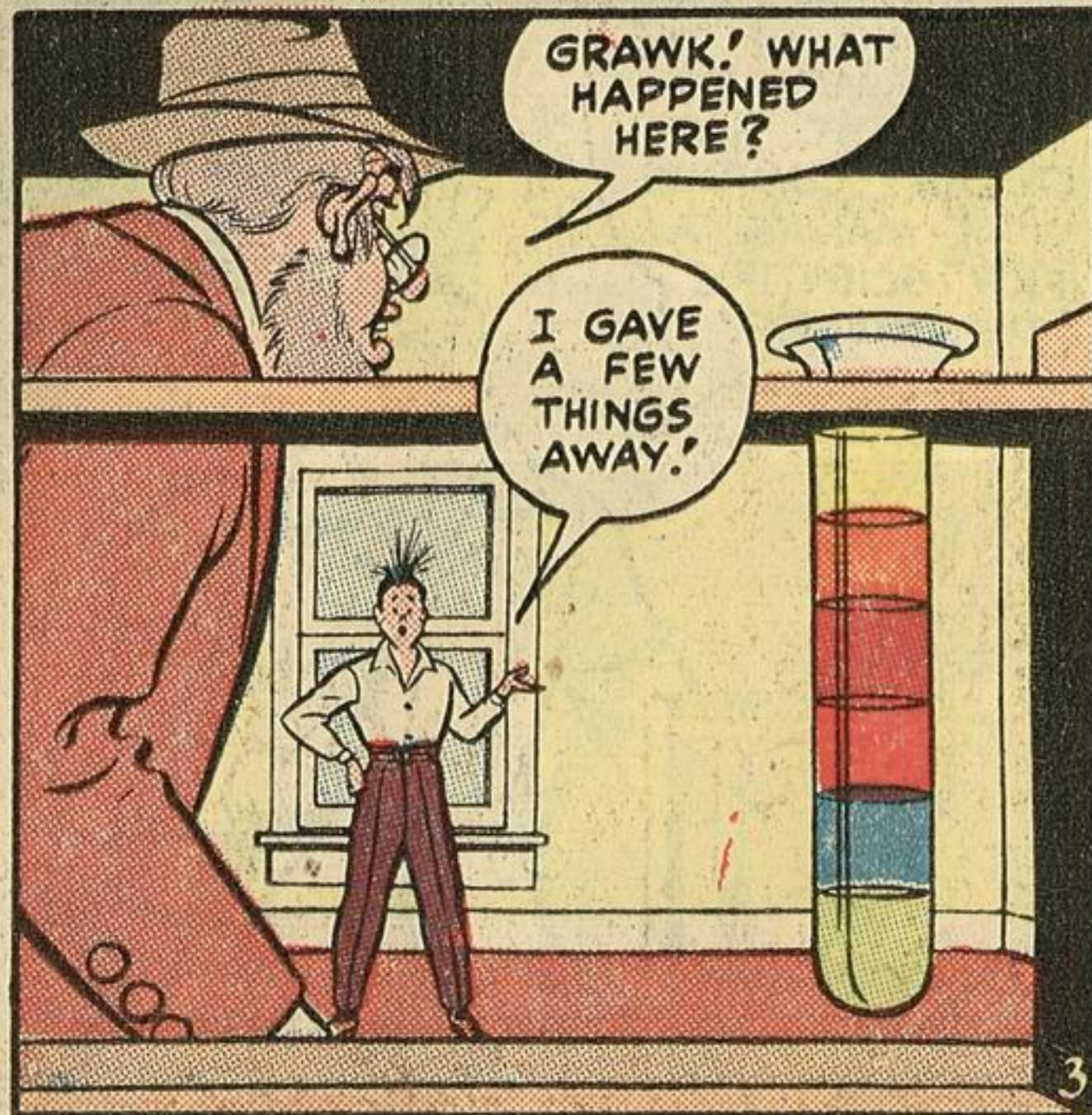


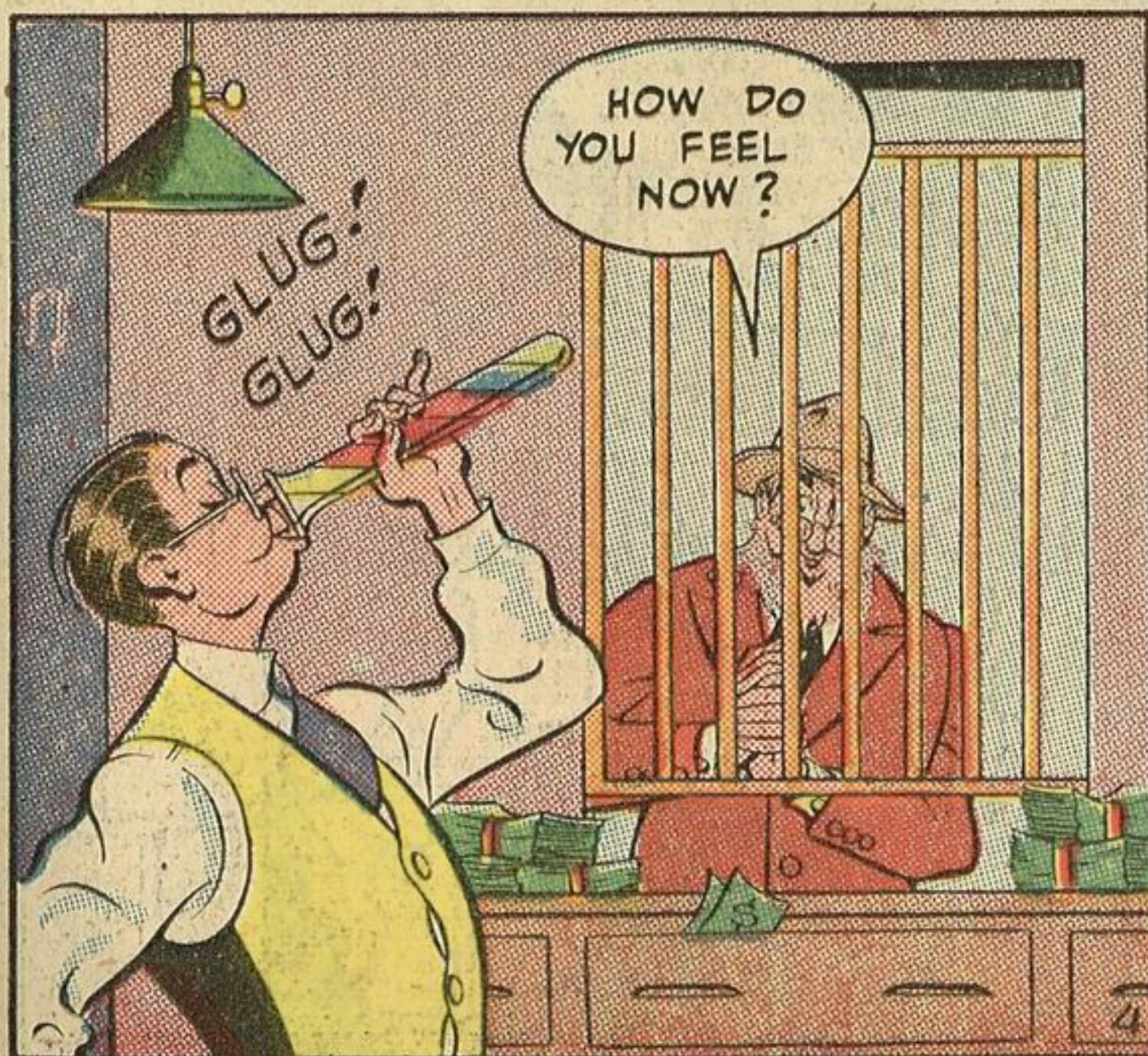
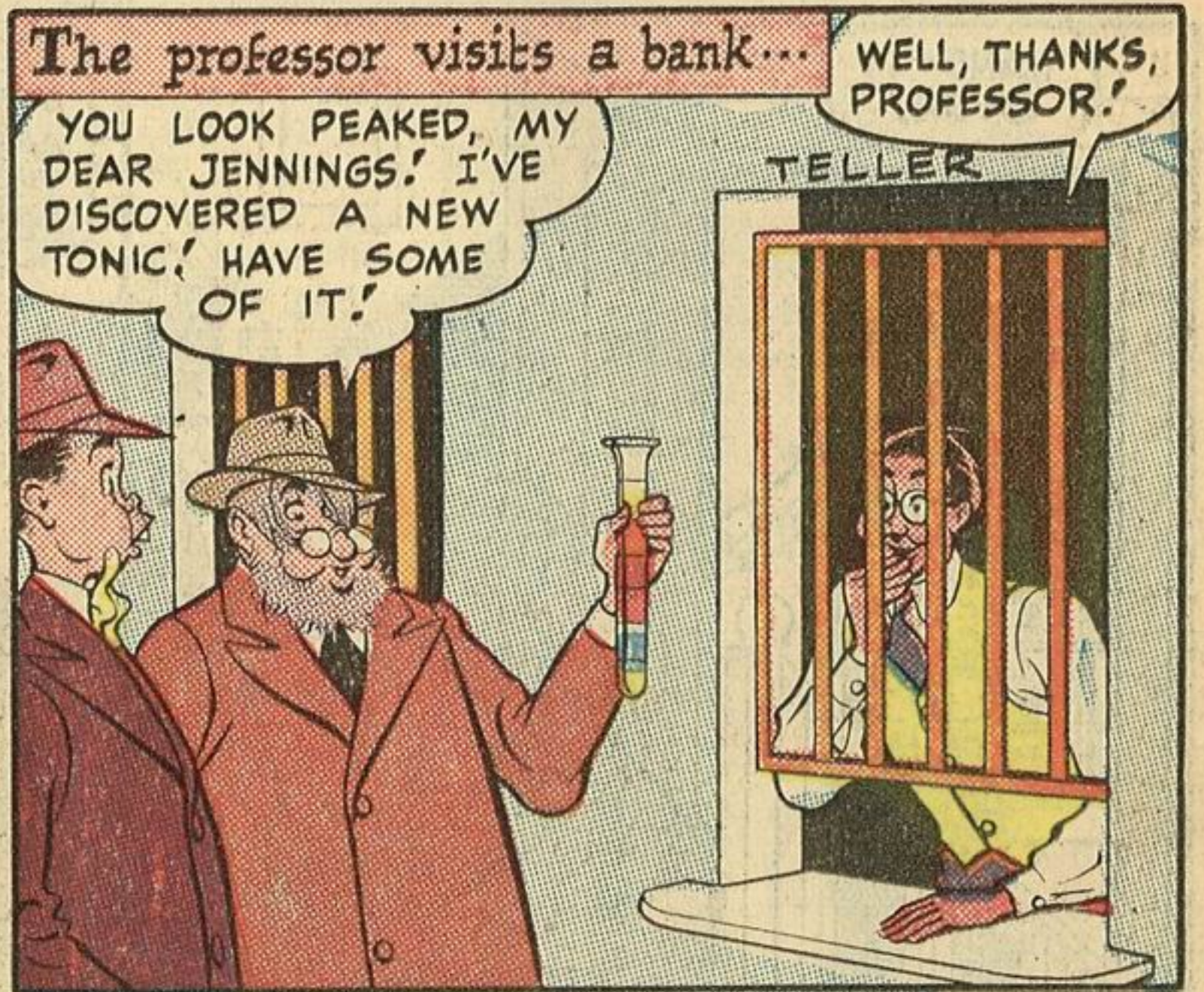
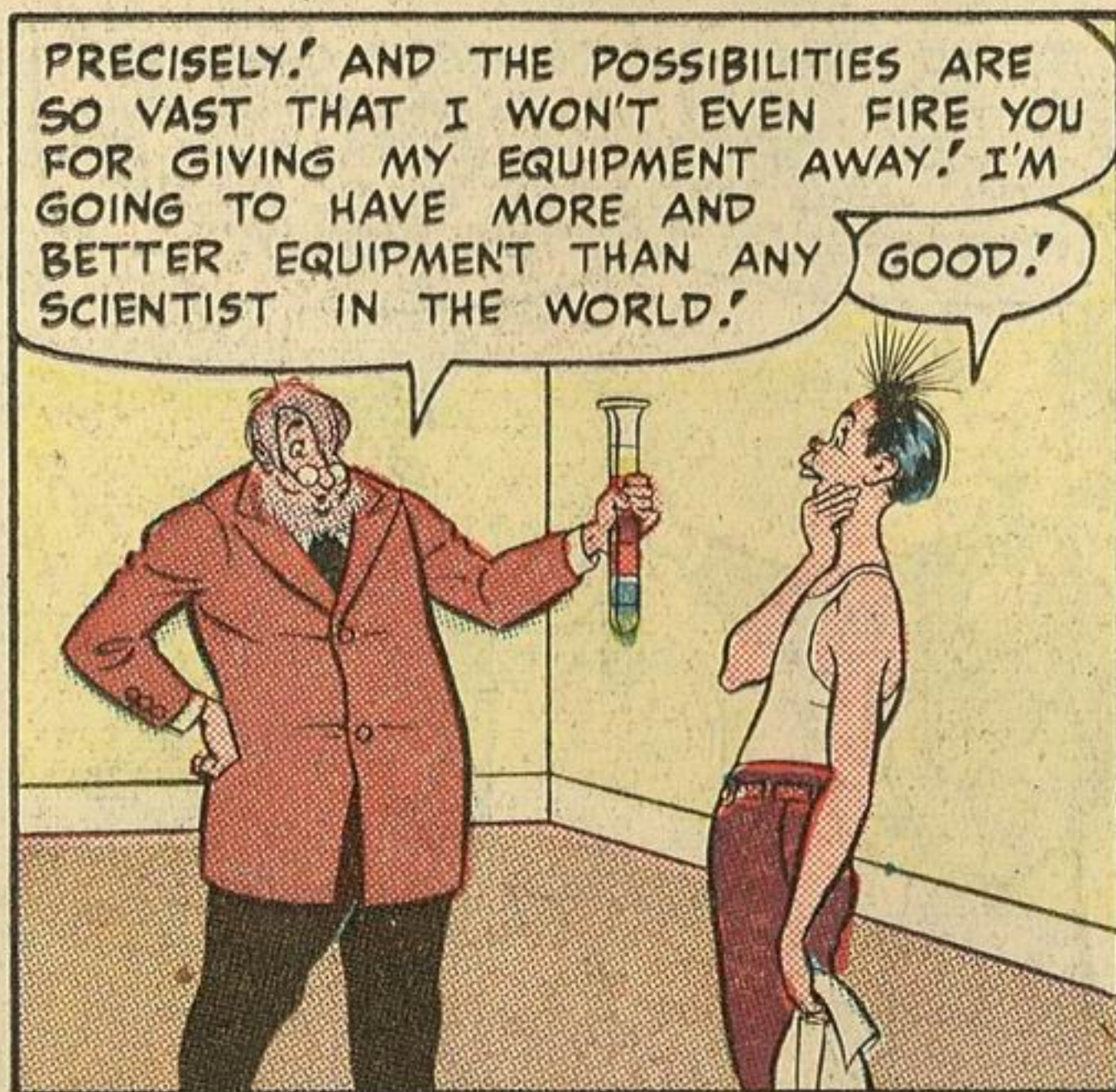
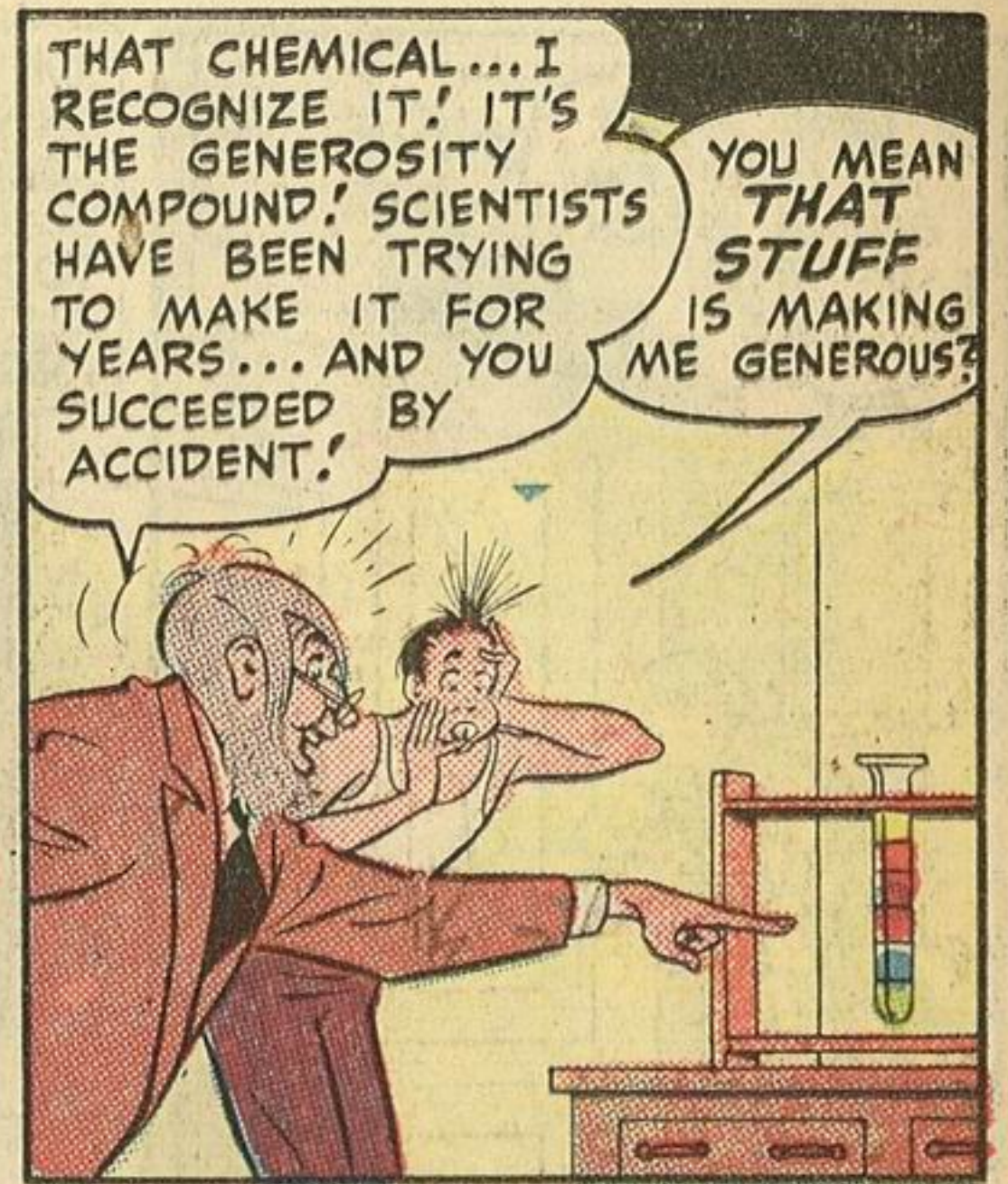


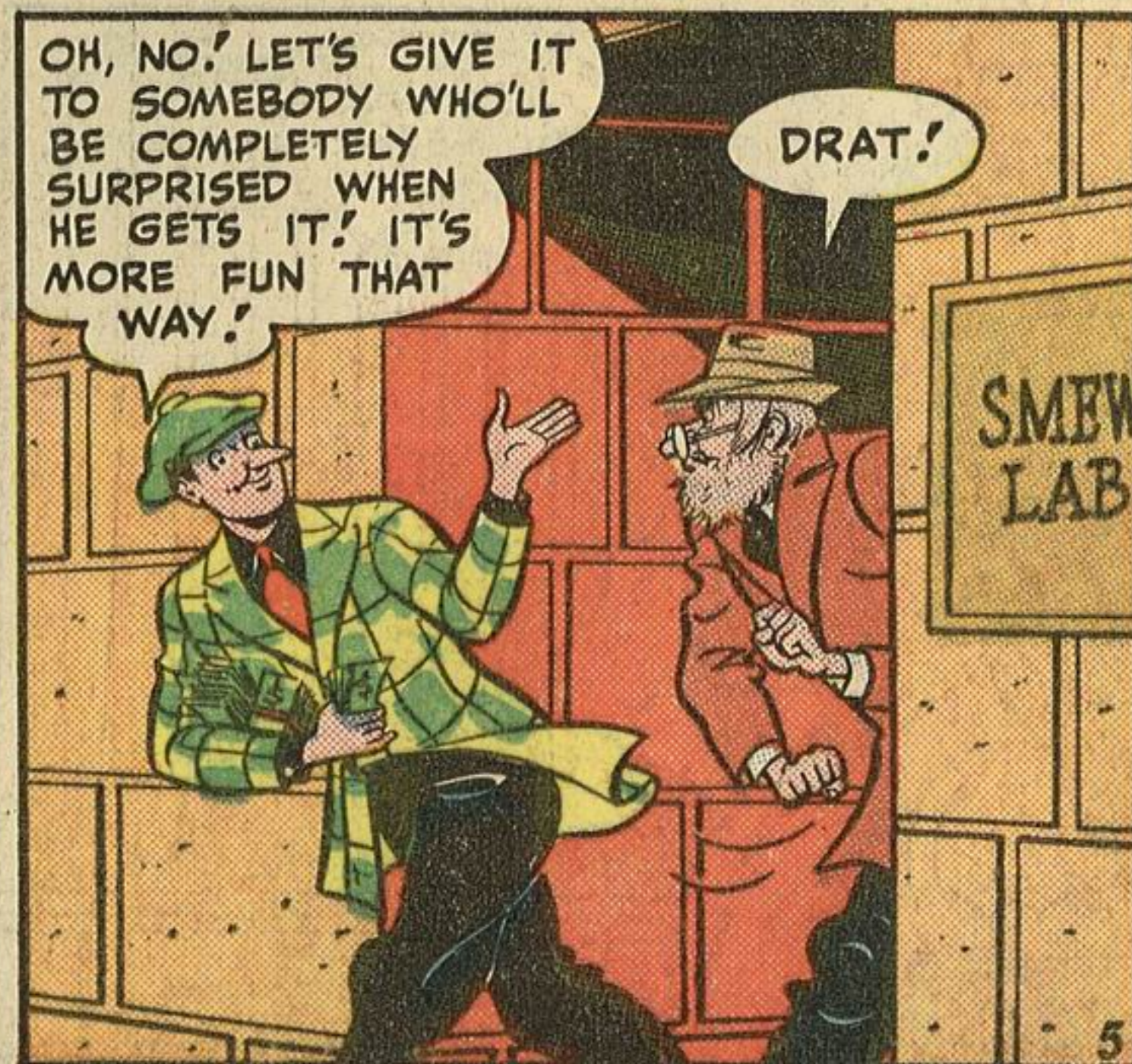
DOGTAG

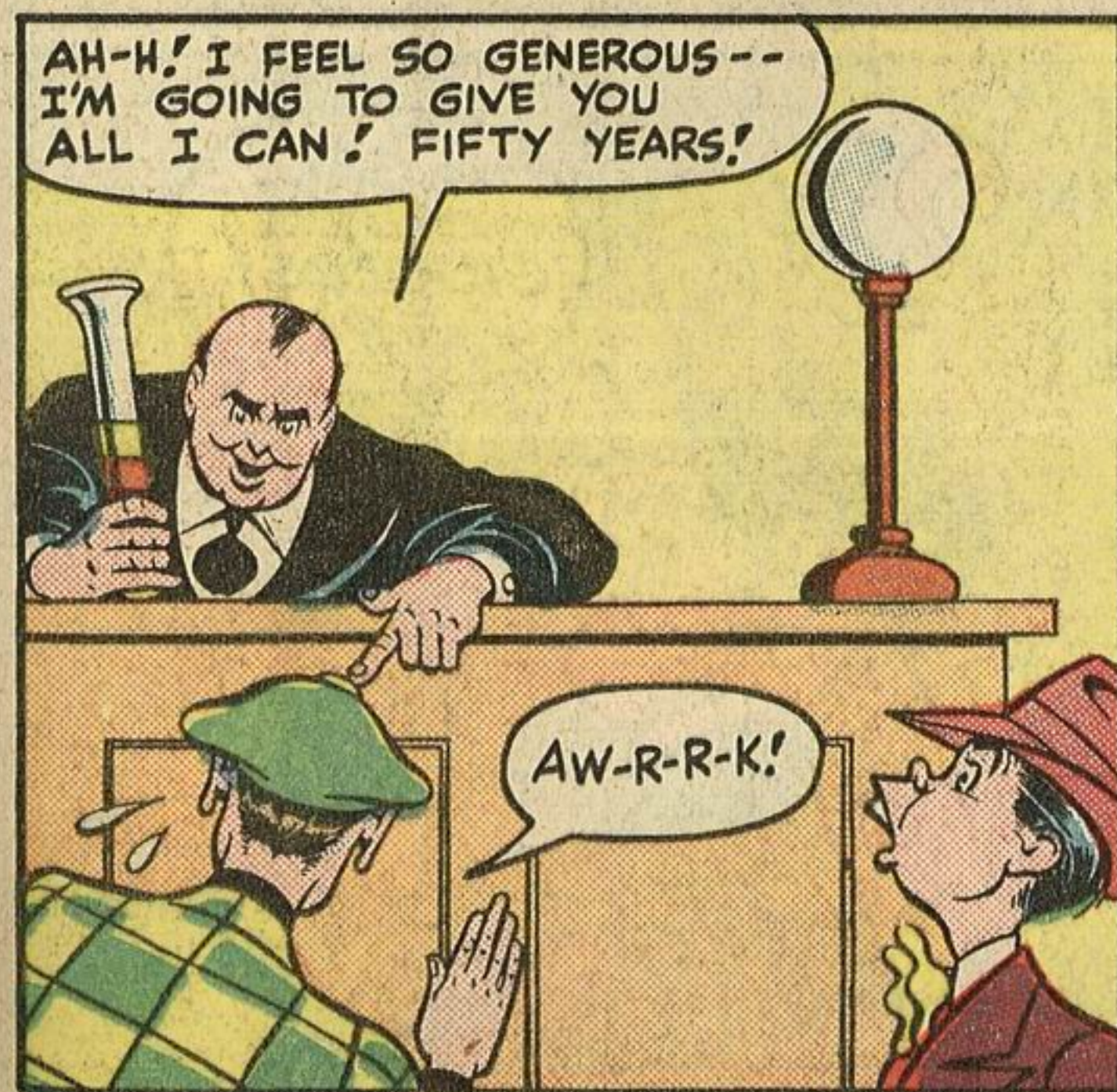




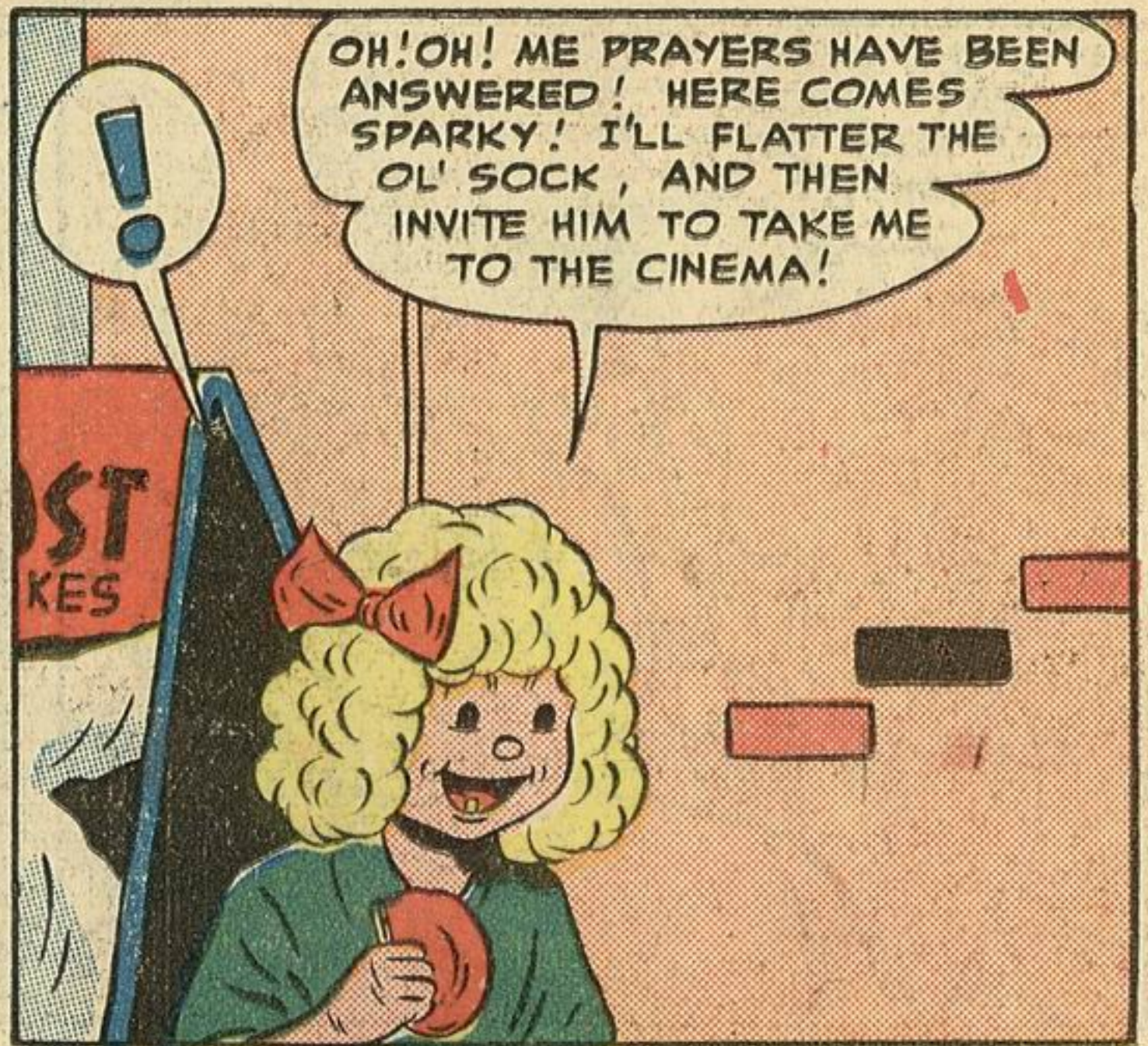








PRUDENCE





ULP!
I THINK IT
WILL, EZRA!

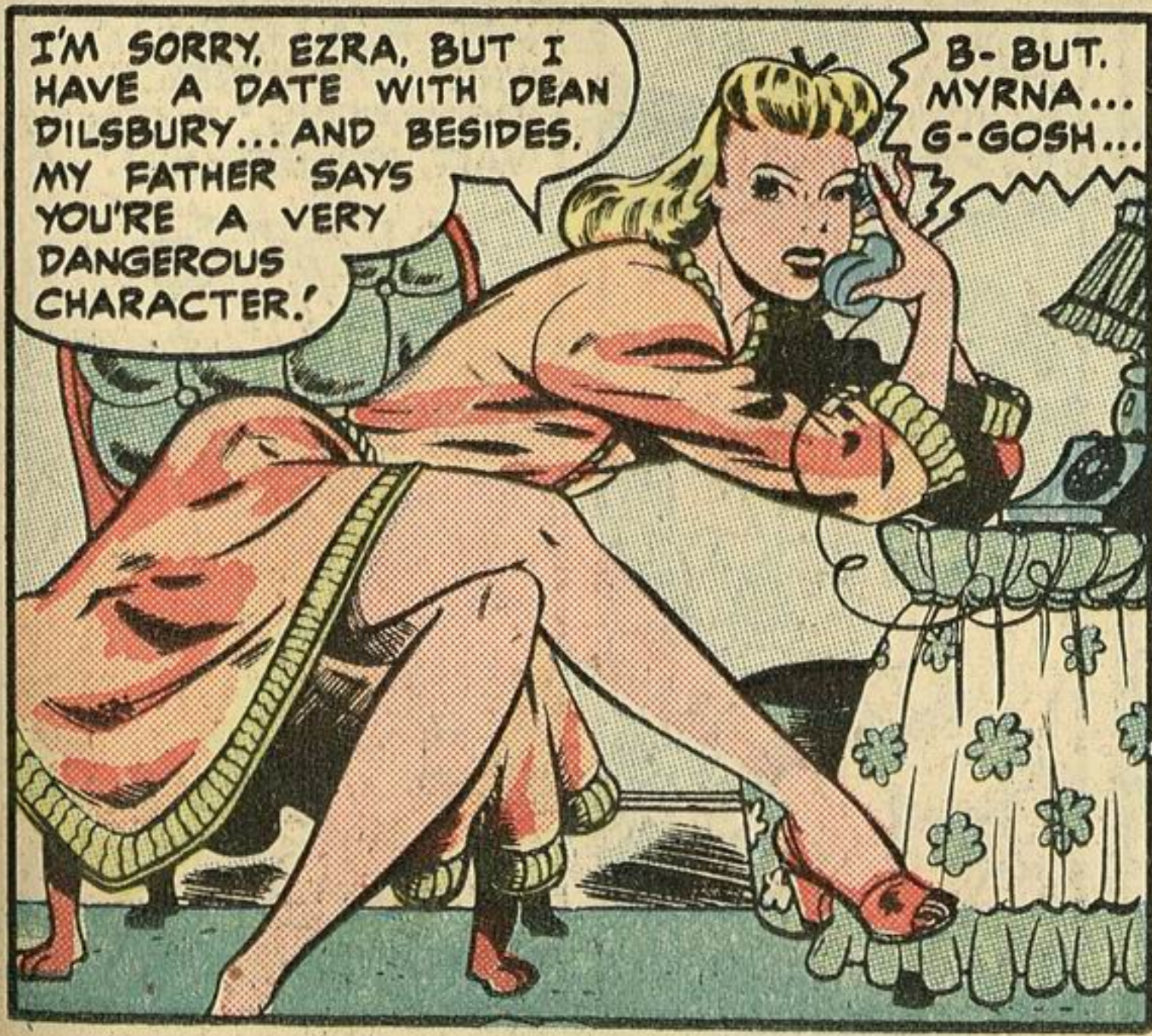
WOW! THIS
HYPNOTISM IS
SWELL STUFF,
ROLLO, I WONDER
IF IT'LL REALLY
PUT A PERSON
TO SLEEP!

Greeting
Cards

Special
\$1.59
EACH

SLUMBER
THROUGH
HYPNOTISM

HYPNOTISM
MADE
EASY



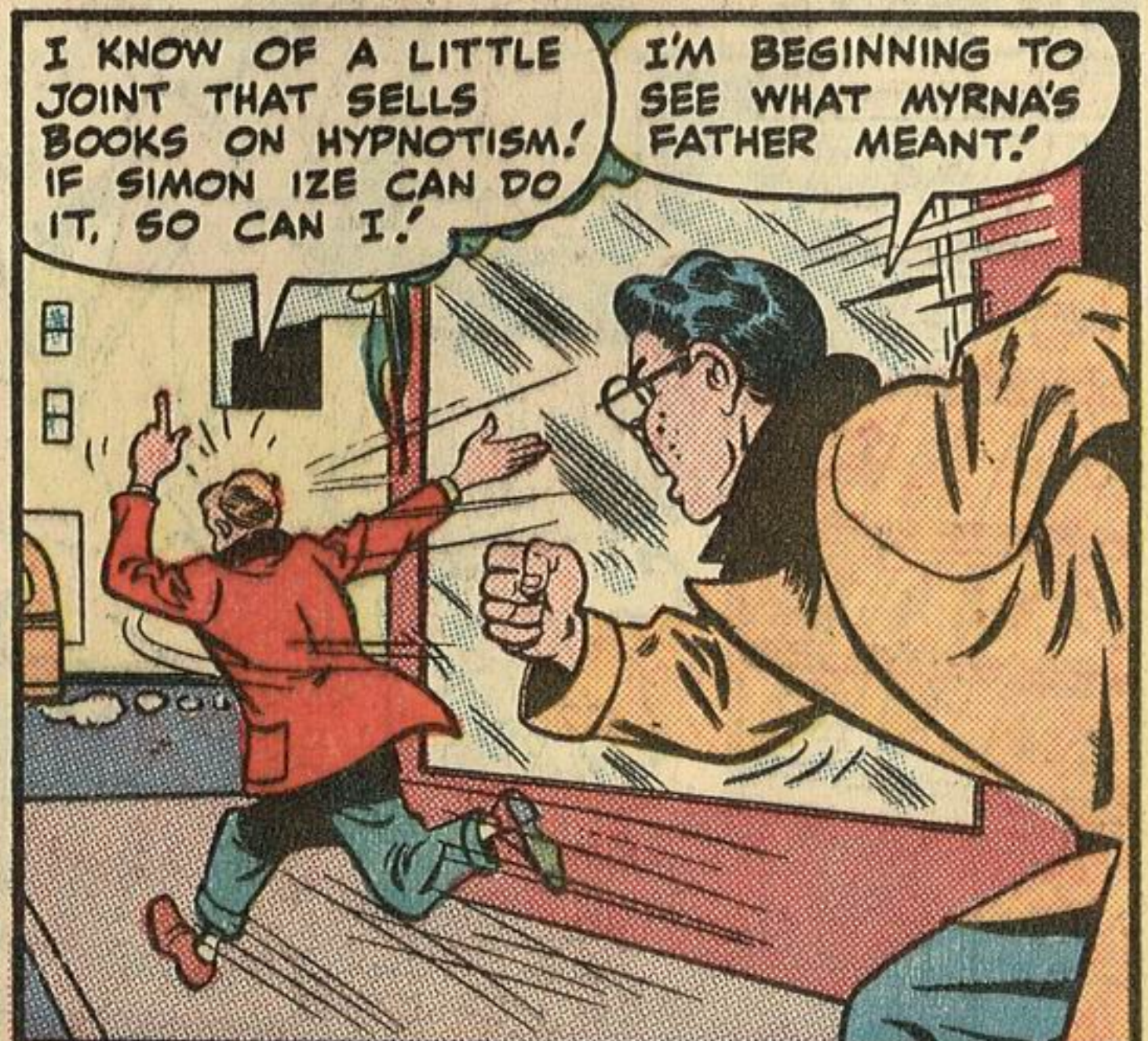
I'M SORRY, EZRA, BUT I
HAVE A DATE WITH DEAN
DILSBURY... AND BESIDES,
MY FATHER SAYS
YOU'RE A VERY
DANGEROUS
CHARACTER!

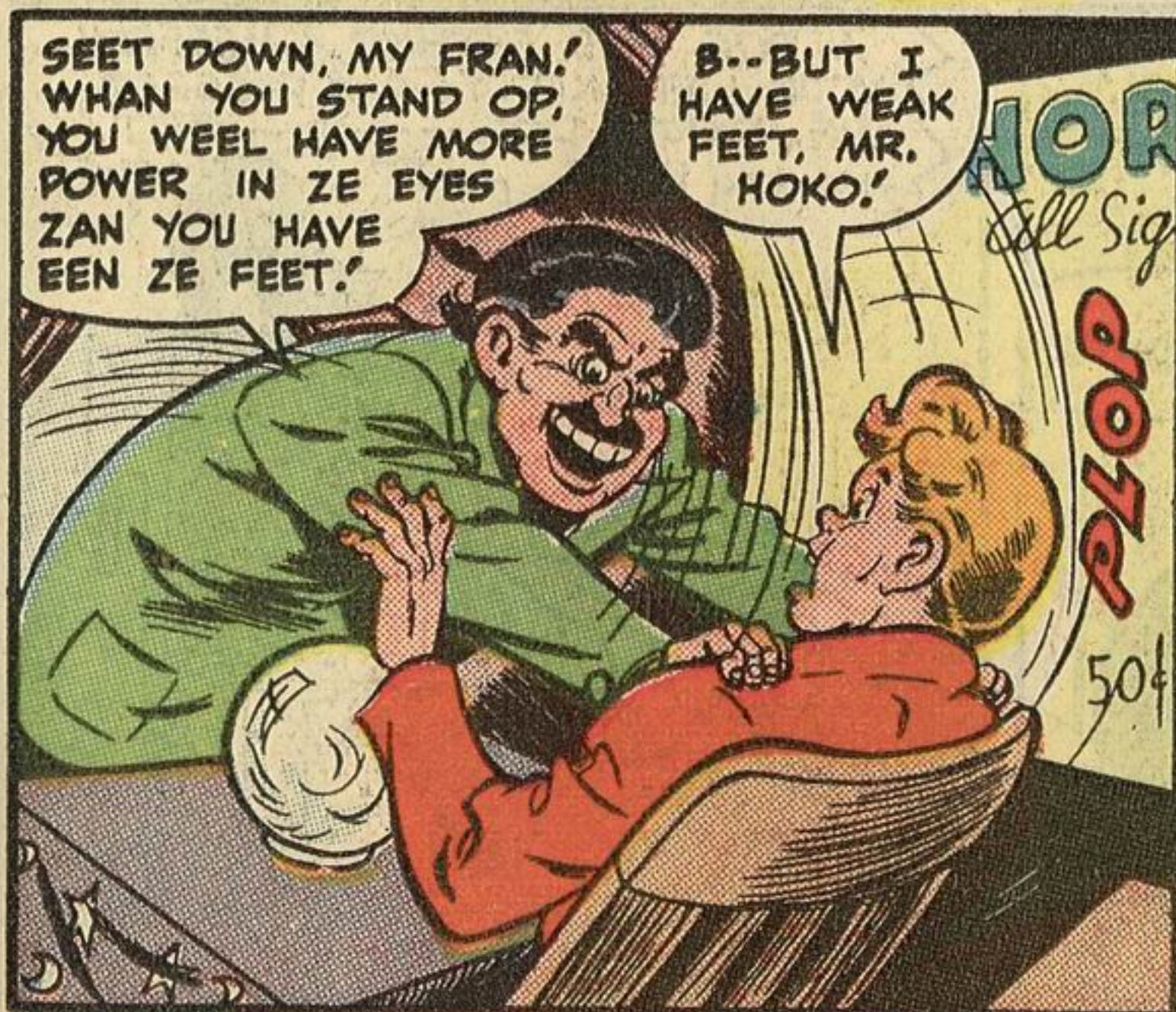
B-BUT,
MYRNA...
G-GOSH...



WHAT'S THE PITCH,
EZRA? YOU LOOK
AS THOUGH YOU'VE
LOST YOUR BEST
FRIEND!

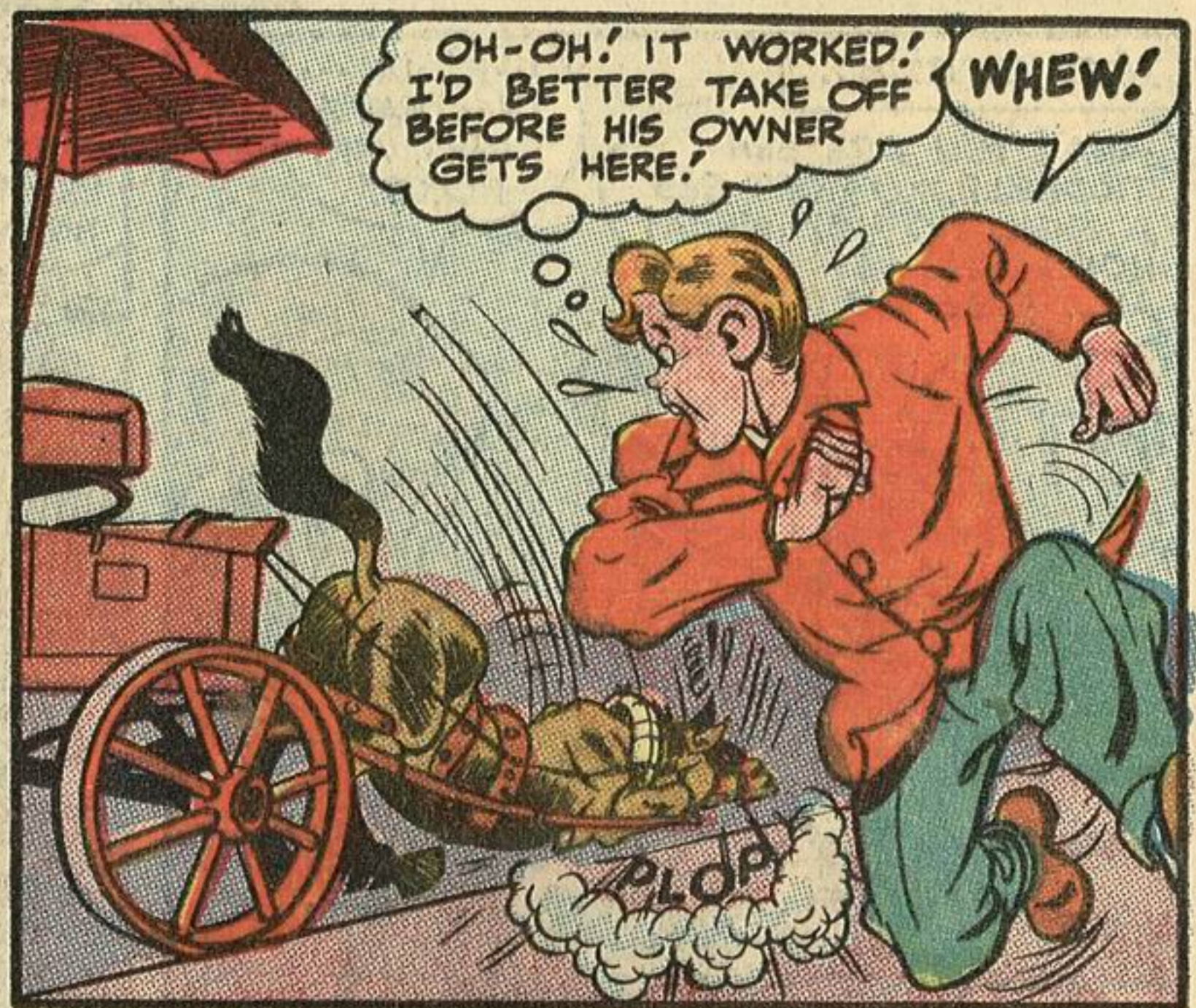
I HAVE! MYRNA
AND I HAVE
JUST PHFFFT!







HORSE, YOU ARE VERY TIRED! YOU HAVE WORKED HARD TODAY! LIE DOWN!



OH-OH! IT WORKED! I'D BETTER TAKE OFF BEFORE HIS OWNER GETS HERE!

WHEW!



HEY, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE NAG, TONY?

NOTHING! HE SUFFERS FROM DROPSY! HE'S BEEN GOING DOWN LIKE THIS EVERY DAY FOR THE PAST THREE YEARS!



WOW! I DON'T KNOW MY OWN STRENGTH! I'LL TEST THE POWER ON THIS CAT, JUST TO MAKE SURE!

MEEOWRR!

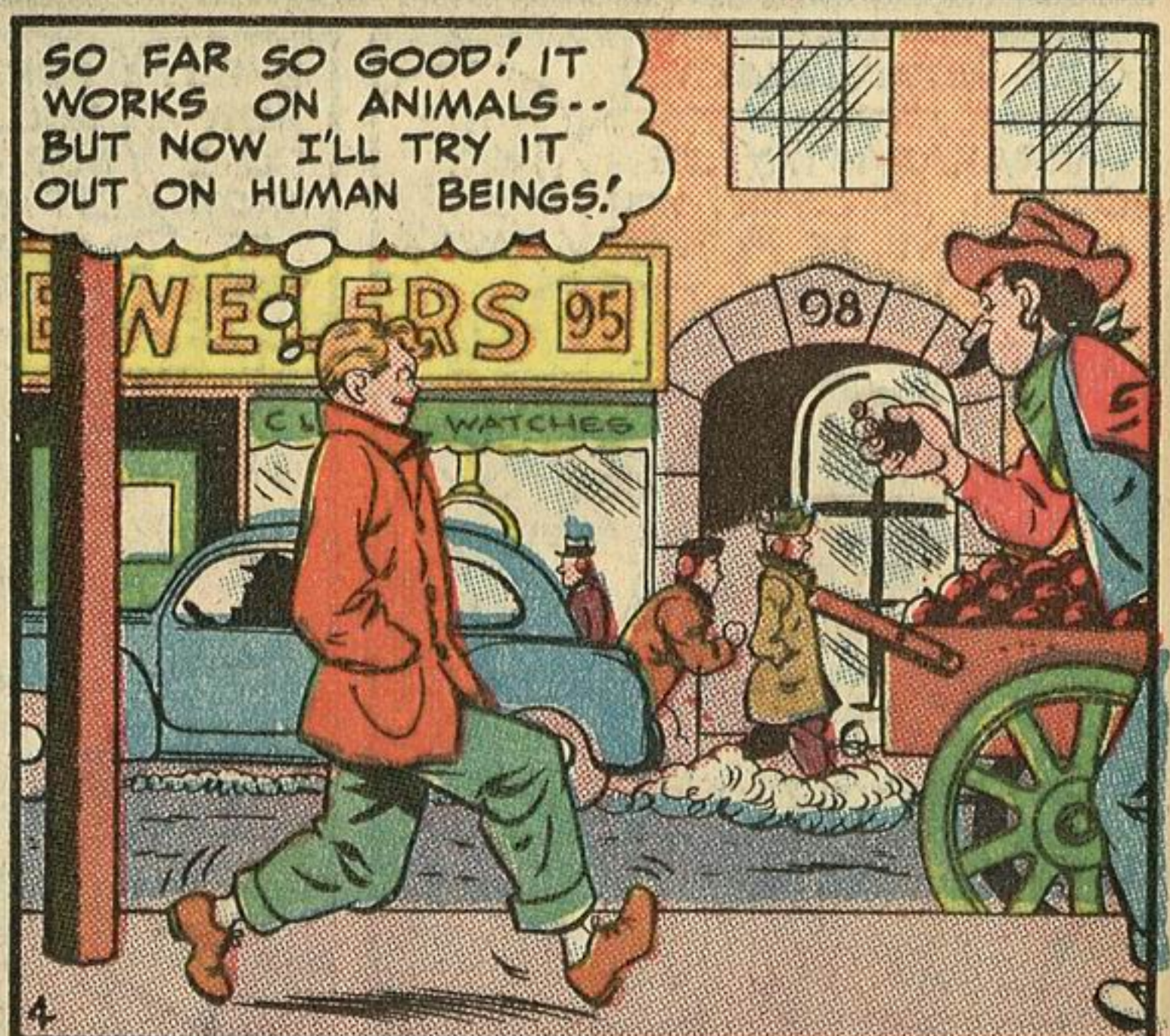


A DOG HAS ENTERED YOUR LIFE, KITTY! A BIG, FIERCE DOG --- HUH?

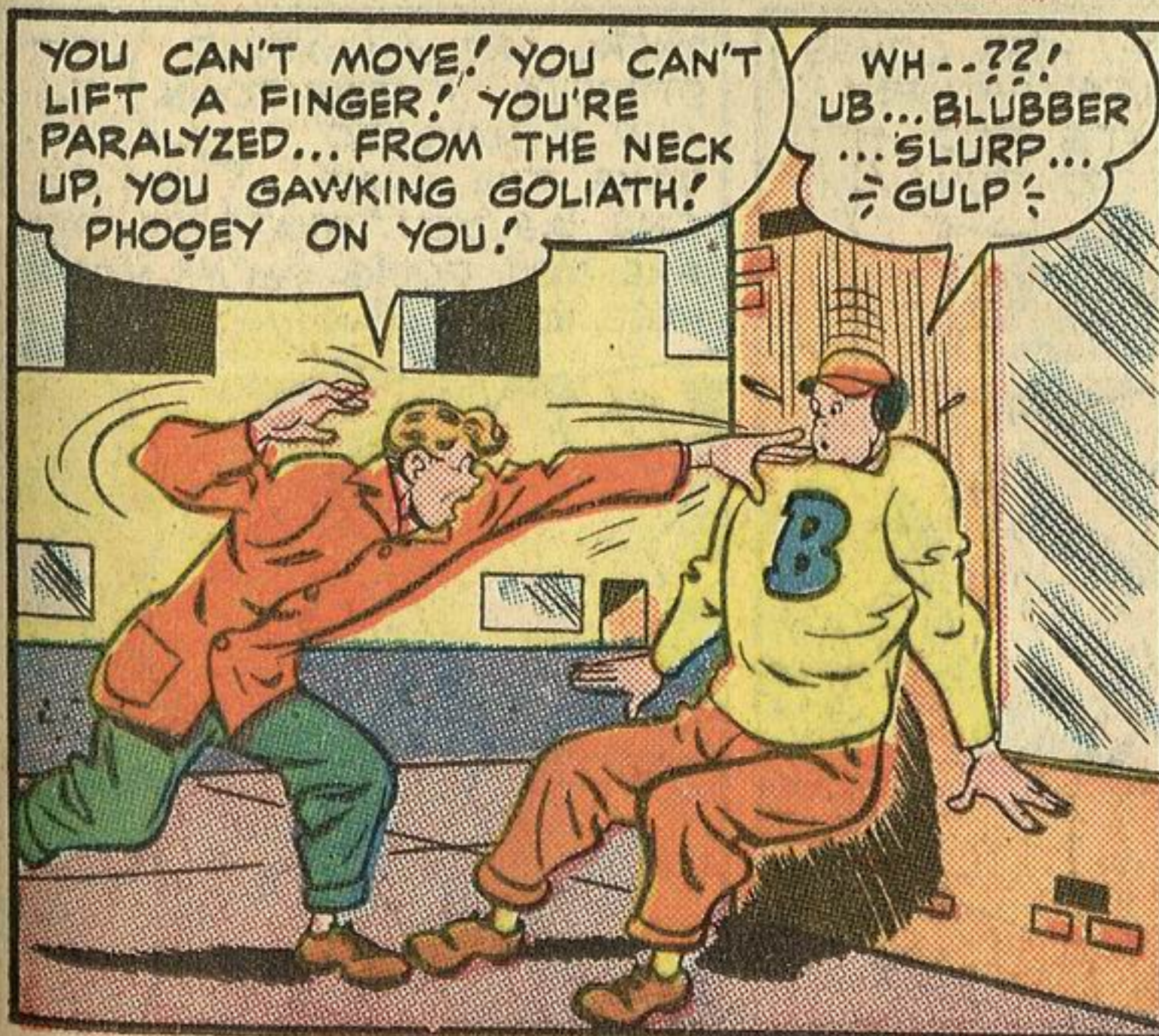
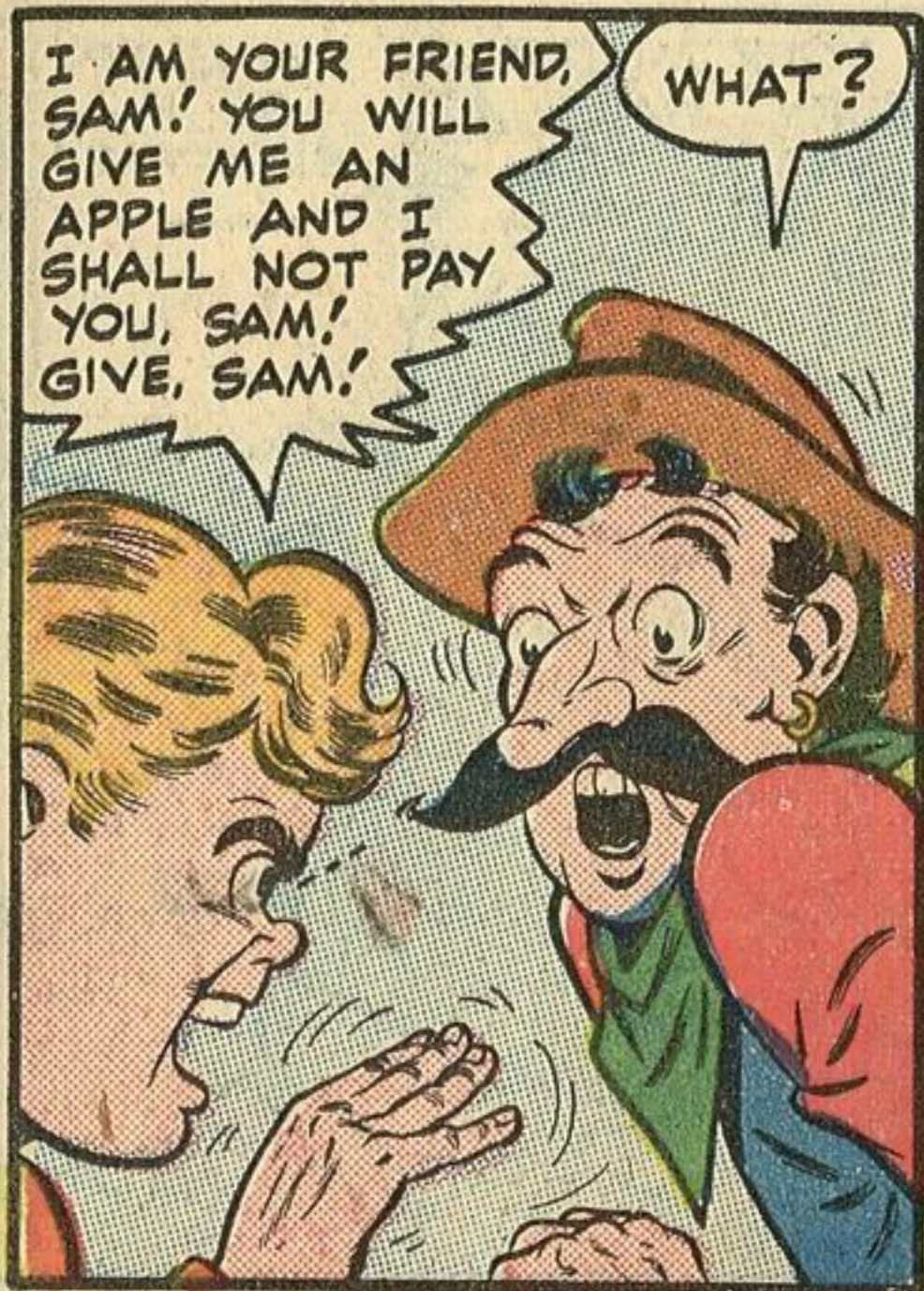
MEEOW... PHSSST... SPIT!

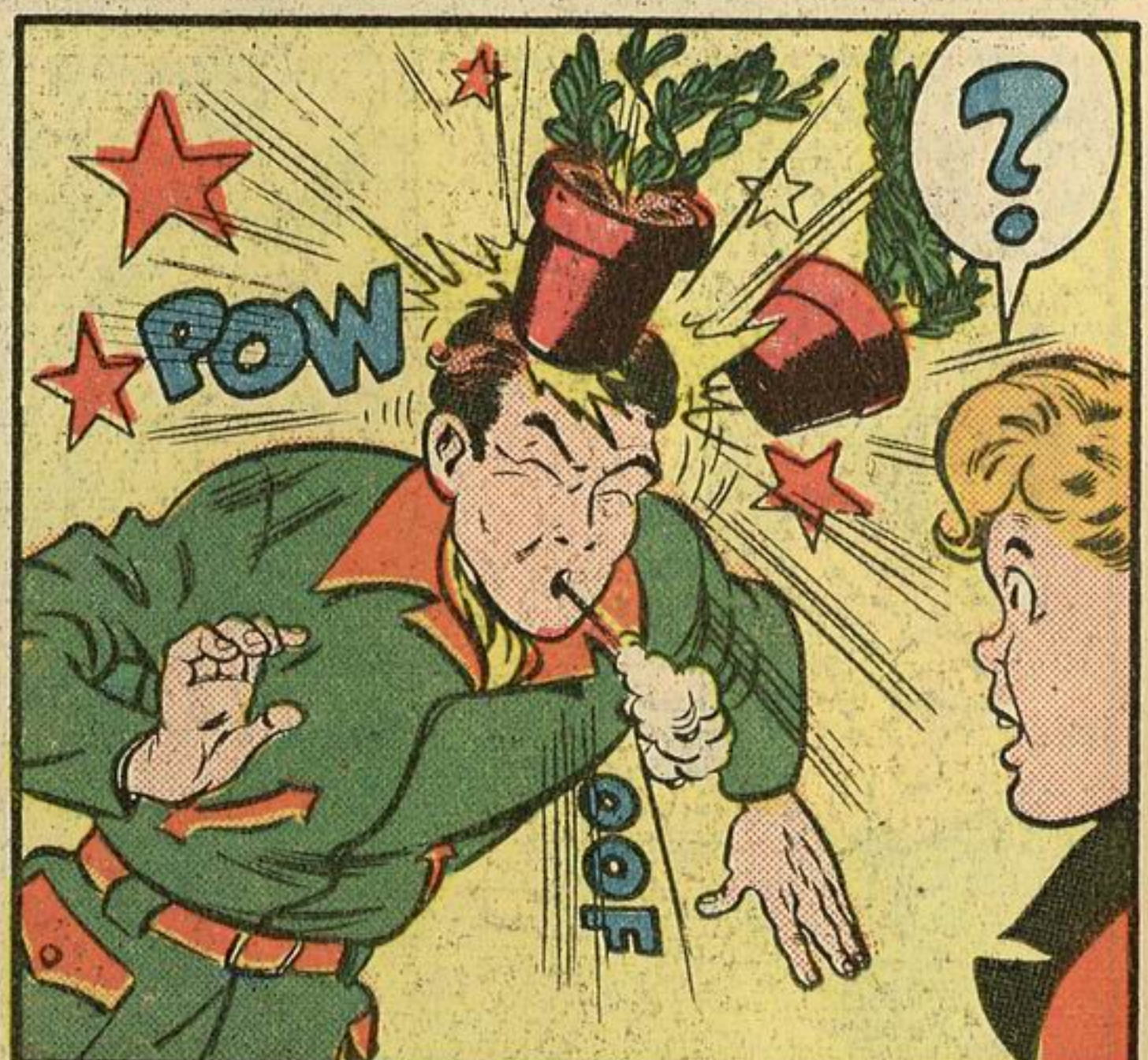
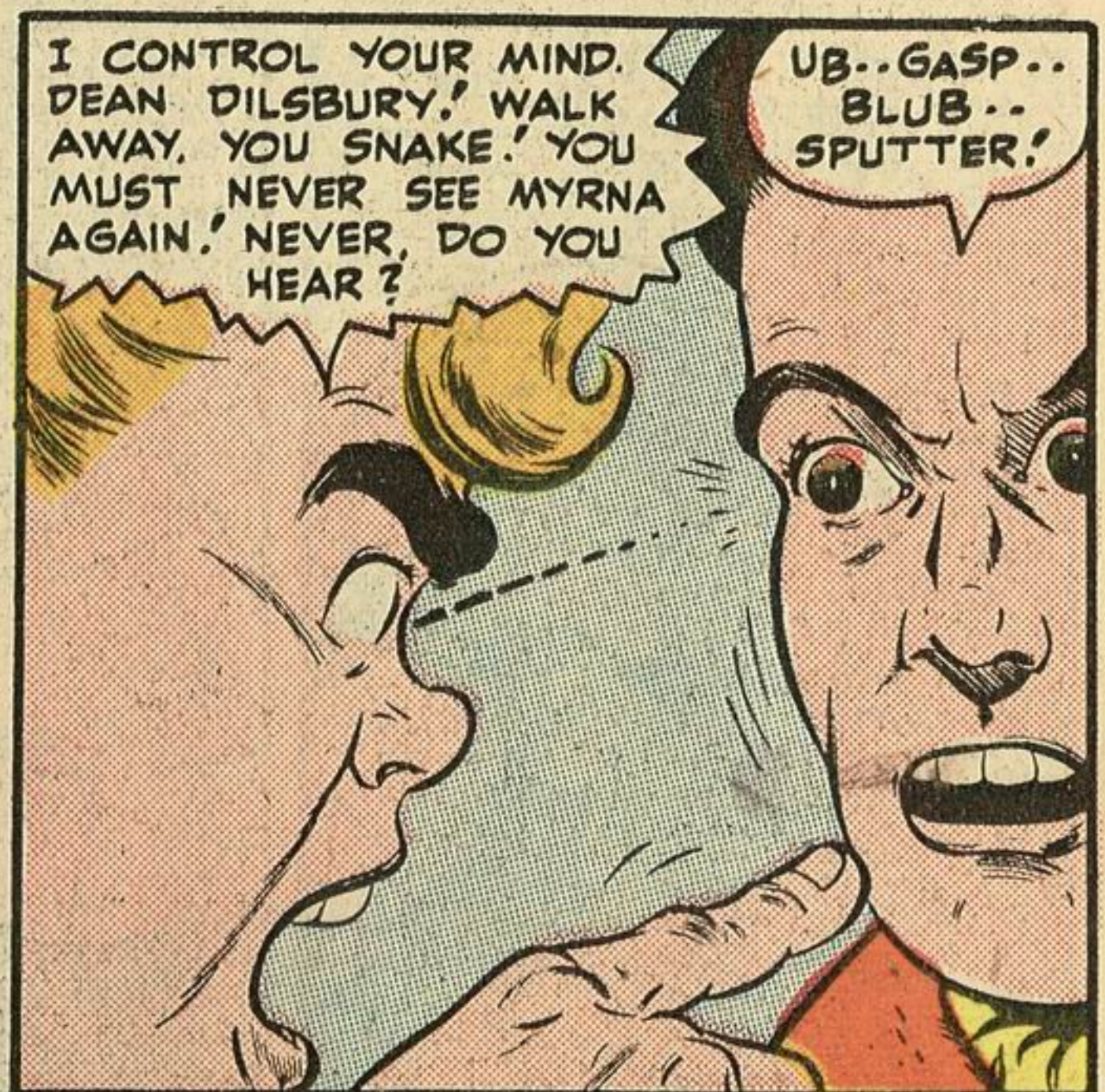


JUMPIN' JEHOSEPHAT! TH-THIS IS BEGINNING TO SCARE ME!



SO FAR SO GOOD! IT WORKS ON ANIMALS... BUT NOW I'LL TRY IT OUT ON HUMAN BEINGS!









I'M GETTING WORRIED ABOUT MY DRAMATIC ABILITY, CHERRY. I'VE TRIED AND TRIED, BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO REGISTER AN EXPRESSION OF HORROR!

ULP!



CHOO CHOO! WAKE UP, DO YOU HEAR? I'VE GOT GREAT NEWS FOR YOU!

BZZZ...
BZZZ...
BZZ...
HUH?



MUST I ALWAYS BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR JOBS FOR YOU? HERE! READ THIS!

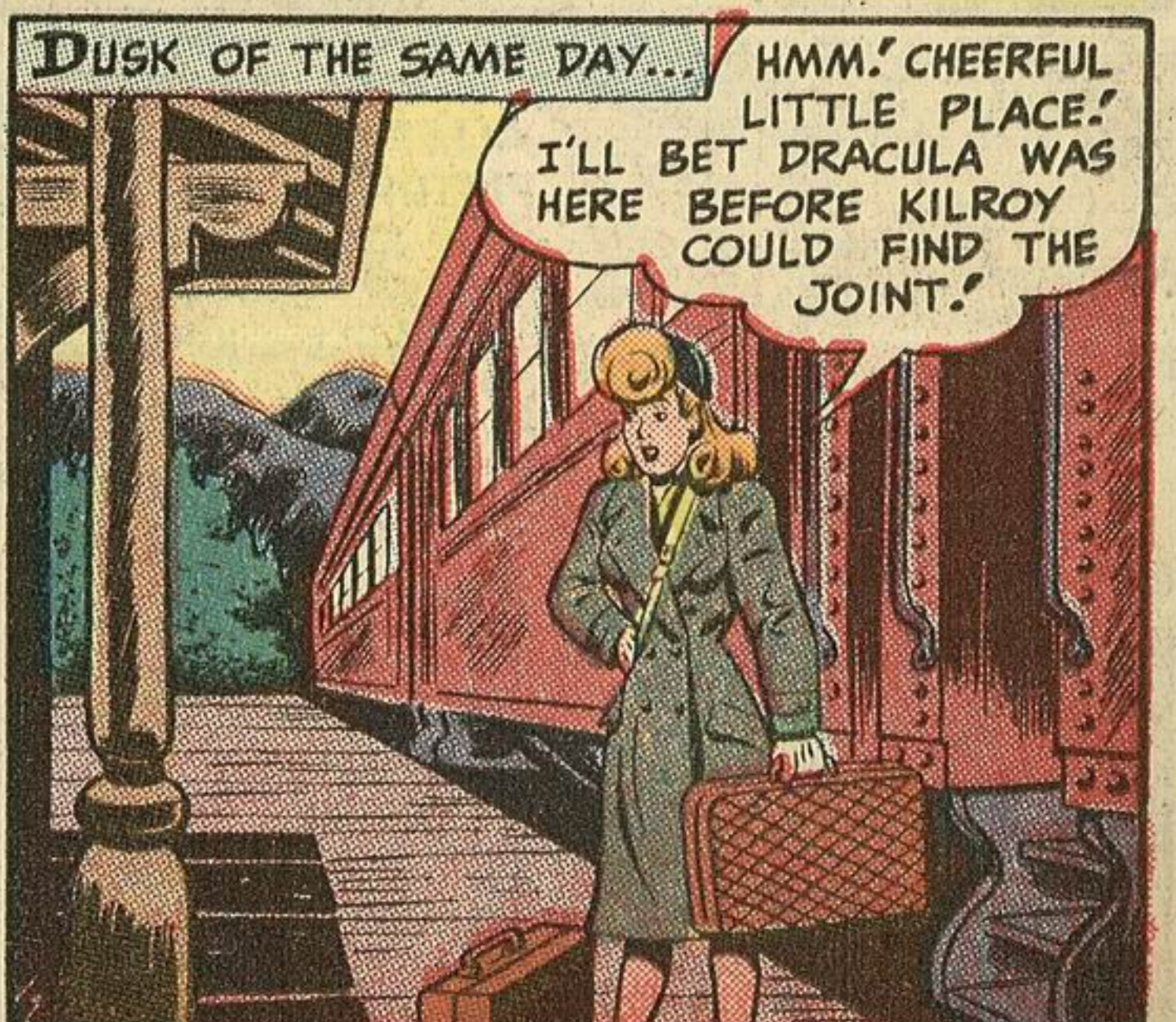
WH-WHAT IS IT, A CALL FOR PAGE GIRLS AT SOME STUDIO?

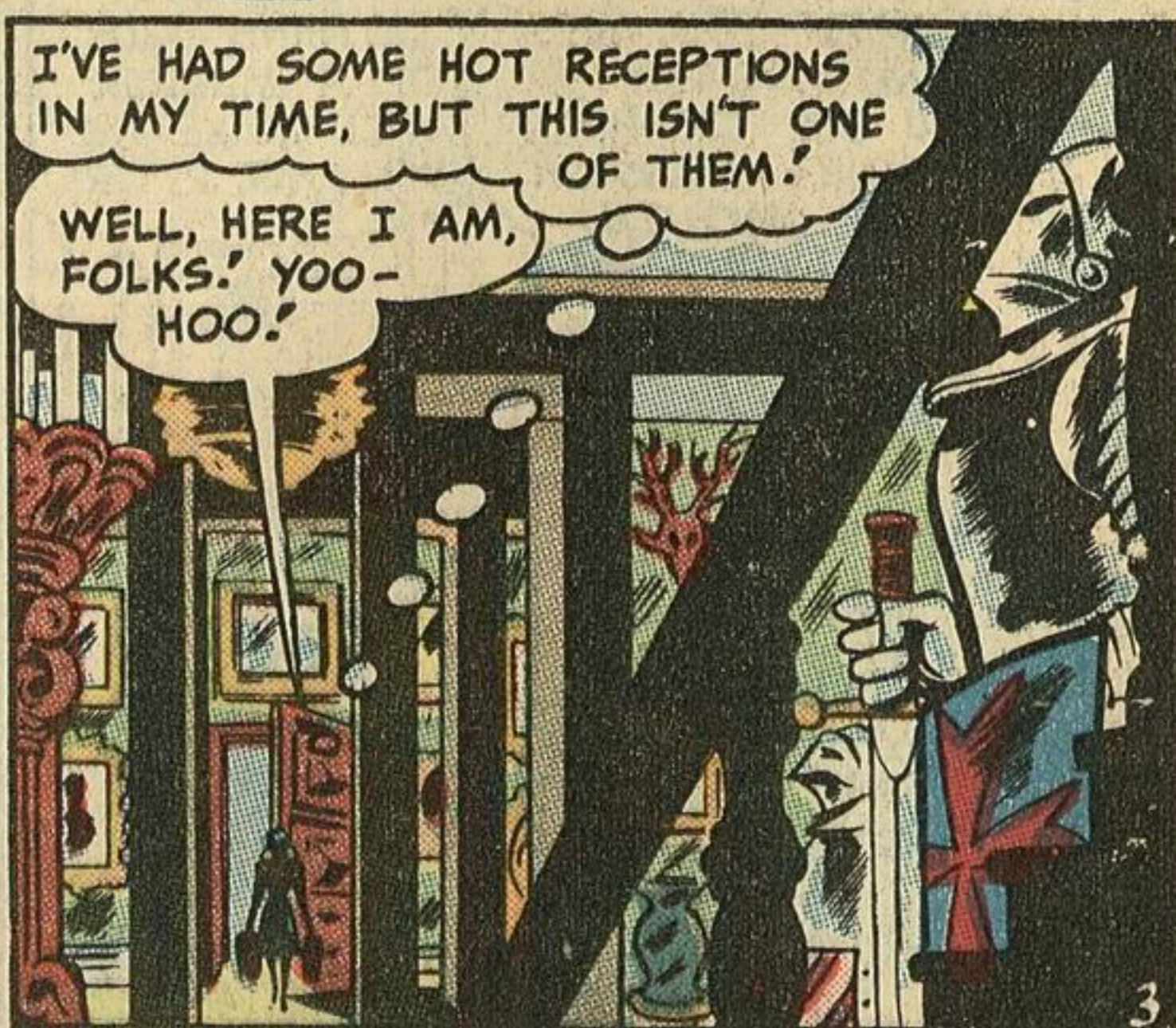


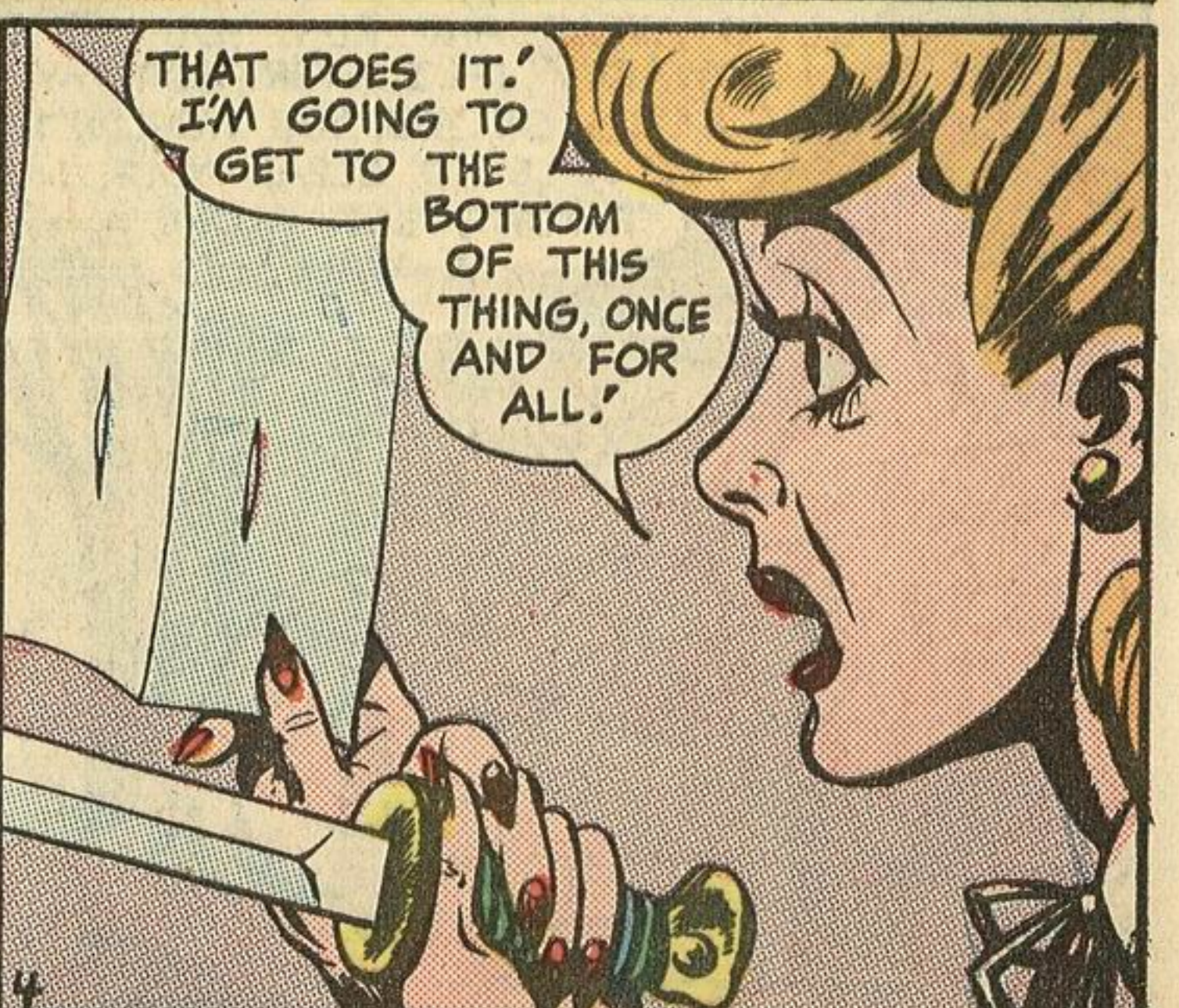
HELP WANTED!
FEMALE
YOUNG LADY TO ACT
AS COMPANION TO
INVALID. MUST BE
ATTRACTIVE, INTELLIGENT,
CAPABLE. NO EXP.
NECESSARY. SALARY
EXCEPTIONAL. CALL
MR. PETERS, EX. 7-8000.
(AGENT FOR J. ARTHUR
BANKS)

YOUNG LADY
STENOGRAPHER
EXP. NOT NE-
CESSARY. ATTRACTIVE,
EXPERIENCE

GIRLS
IN WORK
FACTORY
STEADY
GIRL
WIFE







I'LL KEEP THIS DAGGER AS A SOUVENIR. WHEN I SEE MR. BANKS, I'LL TELL HIM A FEW THINGS!



Suddenly, a monstrous shape detaches itself from the shadows...



TAKING THIS JOB WAS A BETTER WAY TO END A CAREER THAN START ONE!

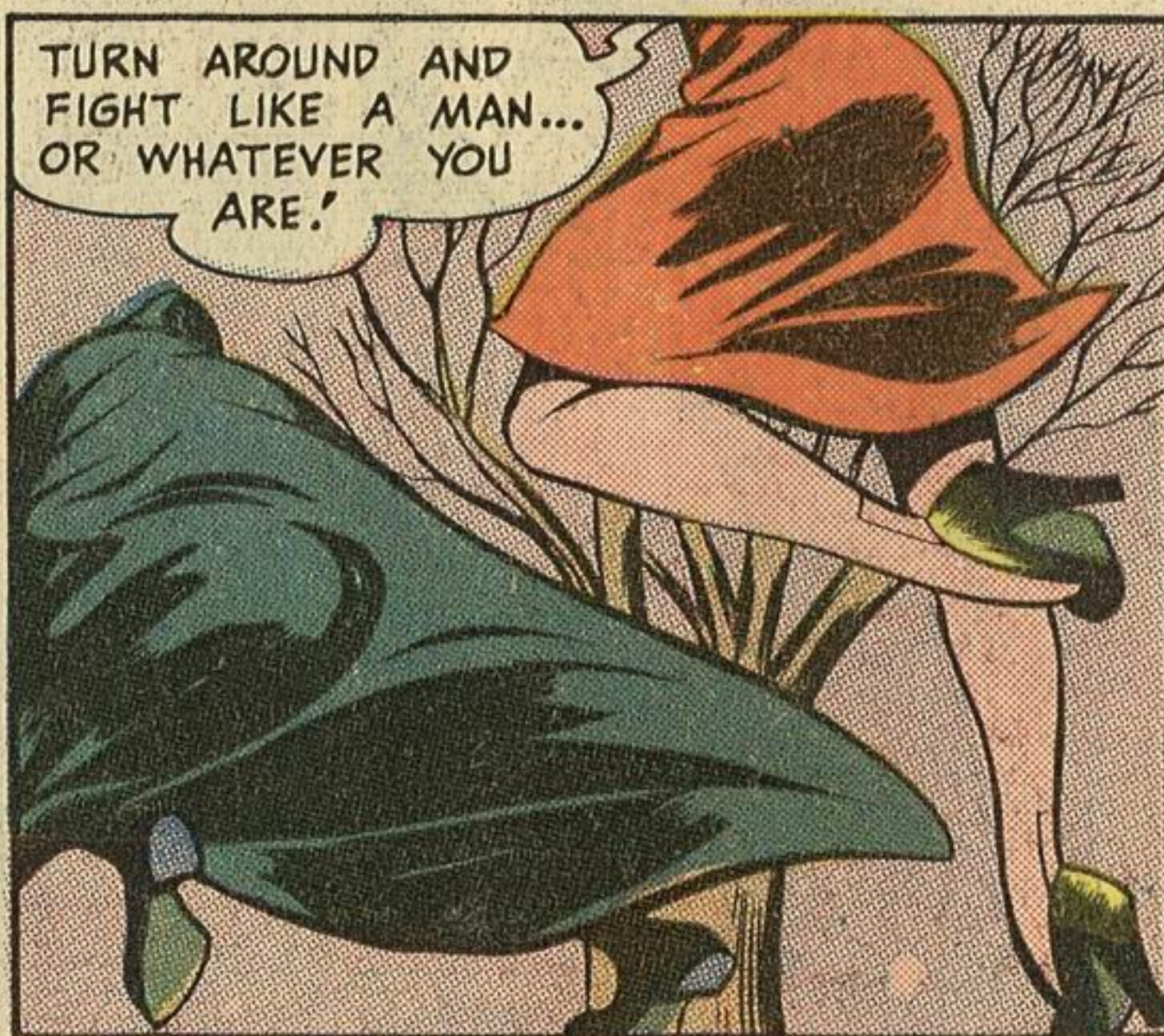
HMM! I HAVE THE QUEEREST FEELING I'M BEING WATCHED! I THINK I'D BETTER GET BACK TO THE HOUSE!



OH! GULP! SO YOU FINALLY SHOWED YOURSELF, EH, FRANKENSTEIN?



TURN AROUND AND FIGHT LIKE A MAN... OR WHATEVER YOU ARE!

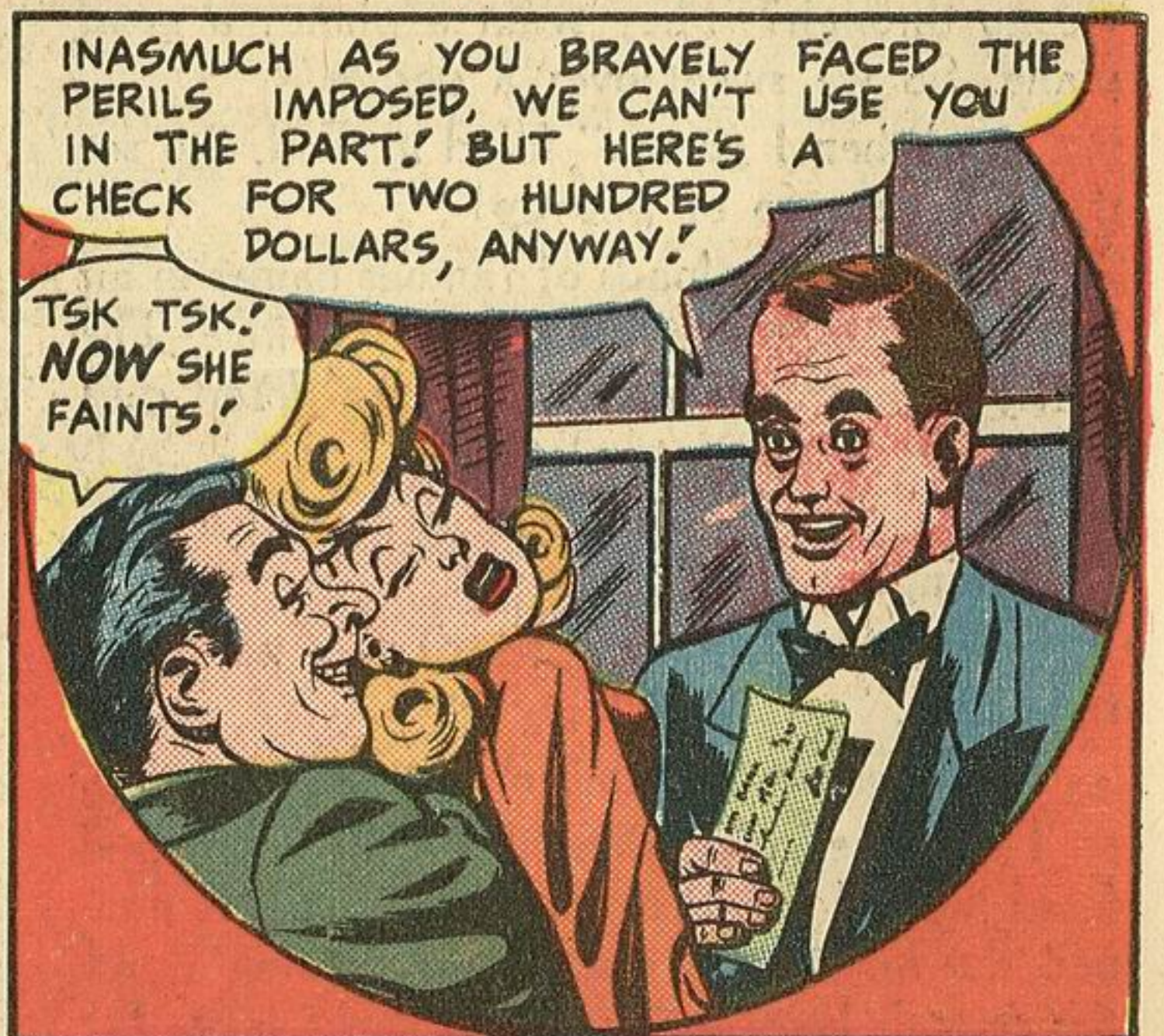


GO AHEAD AND RUN, YOU COWARD! IF I EVER GOT MY HANDS ON YOU, YOU WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO CLEAR YOUR THROAT, LET ALONE A WALL!



THIS IS THE SHOW-DOWN! MR. BANKS IS GOING TO HEAR ABOUT THIS RIGHT NOW, FOR HIS OWN SAFETY!





Blackhawk PLAYS **HAWK**

MUROC Dry Lake, that famous testing ground for California airplanes, shimmered under a blazing sun. Lava. Solid lava for many miles, acted like an iron reflector for the sun's rays.

Test Pilot Ted Kane blinked his eyes and wished the test was over. But it hadn't started as yet. The big shots from L. A. hadn't showed up. No, it would have to come off during the heat of the day. Ted liked to get his testing over in the early mornings; then it was cool, and the sun's glare wasn't so intense.

The chief engineer of Airways stood beside the small, fleet ship that Ted would soon take up. It was his baby, this sleek little monster with its two thousand horses hidden under fancy cowlings. He planned great things for it.

Radical in design, yes; and maybe it did flaunt some of the conventions in engineering; but he knew it was good.

"Give her the works, Ted," he said to Kane. "I think she's got it."

Ted grinned wryly. "I'll soon know, Jack. "But I wish I could have put her through her paces before the sun got so hot."

"I know." Jack glanced around. "No sign of 'em yet. What do the biggies care what we go through? They want a plane, a good plane. So we sweat over a design."

"And then I go up," filled in Ted, "to see if she'll stay up or pile up!"

Two limousine loads of famous names in airplanes drew up to the little operations office. The portly figures crawled out, shaking desert dust from their immaculate clothes.

"Well, boys," said President Hurst, "Is everything all set?"

Jack said, "All set, sir. Ted's going up right now."

The engine was idling on the untested ship. Ted Kane strapped on his double chutes and fitted himself into the narrow cockpit. He gunned the motor and then began taxiing down the smooth lava floor of the extinct lake. He

lifted both hands in the well-known grip as he pulled the little shiny plane into the air.

Up—up went the screaming ship, spiraling into the coppery skies. At last it was but a speck far overhead.

Such tests were routine. There were many things a new plane had to be tested for: weight and balance, response to throttle, stall and side-slip and pull-out and diving ability.

Ted at last got her into a straight-down dive and poured it on. The plane bored downward at full throttle, and when it seemed that she was about to stick her nose into the hard lava, he pulled her out in a howling curve upward.

"Hope he didn't blackout," said the engineer. "Guess he didn't; there he goes for another try."

Ted next took her up to about 10,000 and began a series of rolls and dips, Immelmans and barrel-rolls. The usual stuff.

He was roaring over the field now in a great burst of speed, while the electronic clocker measured the pace.

It was then that something happened. The motor of the new plane quit. Flame streaked from the sides. The plane nosed over. They saw Ted bail out, fall several hundred feet, then his chute ballooned.

The plane itself turned over and over, then crashed straight down, exploding when it struck the lava.

"Dunno what happened," reported Ted when he got back to the test field. "The engine suddenly quit. Seized. Froze. I dunno."

A squad of men was working over the smoking wreck of the plane. They soon had a report on what had stalled the engine: bearings tightened on the crankshaft.

This was something for the engineers to figure out. They couldn't because the examiners had found no trouble with the oil leads to the bearings.

Jack, designer of the new ship, was in a

terrible dither. He swore the design was right, that no fundamental error had gone into the engine or the plane itself. Then what was wrong?

During ensuing weeks, a half dozen other new plane models were tested at Muroc; the same thing happened to them all. Frozen bearings. Crashes. In one instance, the test pilot was unable to extricate himself from the falling ship and went to his death.

Blackhawk and his famous crew soared over Muroc in a large plane. The government had at last called them in on the case. Officials were baffled. Tests had to be made at Muroc, it being one of the few places in the state where air conditions were ideal for all tests.

"There is to be a test tomorrow of that new PB-3 for Maco," said Chuck, one of Blackhawk's men. "It's a big one."

Stanislaus grunted. "There's something in the air that kills the engines."

Blackhawk nodded. "That's what I've been thinking. Yet none of the instruments show anything."

"The tests are to be tomorrow," Andre reminded them. "Maybe today the air is clear."

It was at one o'clock the following day that Blackhawk spotted the aircraft flying high above their own plane. The Muroc tests were to come off in an hour. What was that plane doing far overhead? He tried to contact it with radio, but failed.

Chuck said, "They won't answer. It looks funny to me."

"Yes," said Blackhawk, "let's go up."

But the farther they spiraled upward, the higher the mysterious plane sped.

Olaf said in his deep Scandinavian, "It iss a rocket ship, ja. We cannot catch it."

Blackhawk said, "But there is a way to halt it, Olaf . . . man the gun. Load with the aluminum powder shells . . . get the range."

"It's 2400 yards, Blackhawk," said Chuck, tinkering with the radio apparatus.

"Aim one hundred yards in front of them and cut loose!" ordered Blackhawk.

The gun began coughing shells upward. Blackhawk watched through his powerful glass.

"There," he reported. "The first shells have exploded. They're entering the aluminum screen. Ah—just as I thought. Pre-ignition is giving 'em trouble!"

Andre was looking, too. "They are bailing out!" he cried.

It was true. The big rocket ship above them had become unmanageable, and now its crew was bailing out, while the ship itself was falling out of control.

"Let's give 'em room," said Blackhawk as he maneuvered his plane out of the way.

Olaf said, "Ach, now I understand. I haaf been taking samples of the air . . . we'll have a nice report to make to those government men—why their motors seized."

Blackhawk nodded. "I'll radio the field and tell them to grab those men as they hit."

As Blackhawk's plane cruised in a circle, the strange rocket ship crashed in a burst of flame far below. Its crew was long ago in custody.

Then abruptly, the engines of Blackhawk's ship began to cough and sputter. One of them suddenly shook violently and flew out of its nacelle.

"Cut the other engine!" he ordered. "Migosh, I forgot all about our own ship. Its engines are just as susceptible to their devilry as any others."

Blackhawk and his men came down and in for a landing in a smooth glide, both motors still; of course, one engine lay on the field, a blackened, shattered hunk of iron.

In a moment experts were all over the ship. Their report was the same as previously: seized bearings.

"Look at the sediment under a microscope," Blackhawk said. "I think you'll find your answer. You see, these fellows—I think you'll find they are working for a belligerent government—were using a full rocket ship, which was more or less immune to fine steel powder, which they were throwing into the atmosphere. That's what ground out your bearings—ours, too."

"Then how did you stop their ship?" asked one of the experts.

"Aluminum powder," replied Blackhawk. "Pre-ignition fouled their engine. It's the only way to stop a rocket."

... AND FURTHERMORE, YOU BUSTED-DOWN OLD BATTLE AXE, IF YOU GIVE ME KID A Z IN DEPARTMENT AGAIN FOR THROWIN' SPITBALLS AT YOU, I'LL TWIST YOUR BEAK INTO A CORK SCREW!

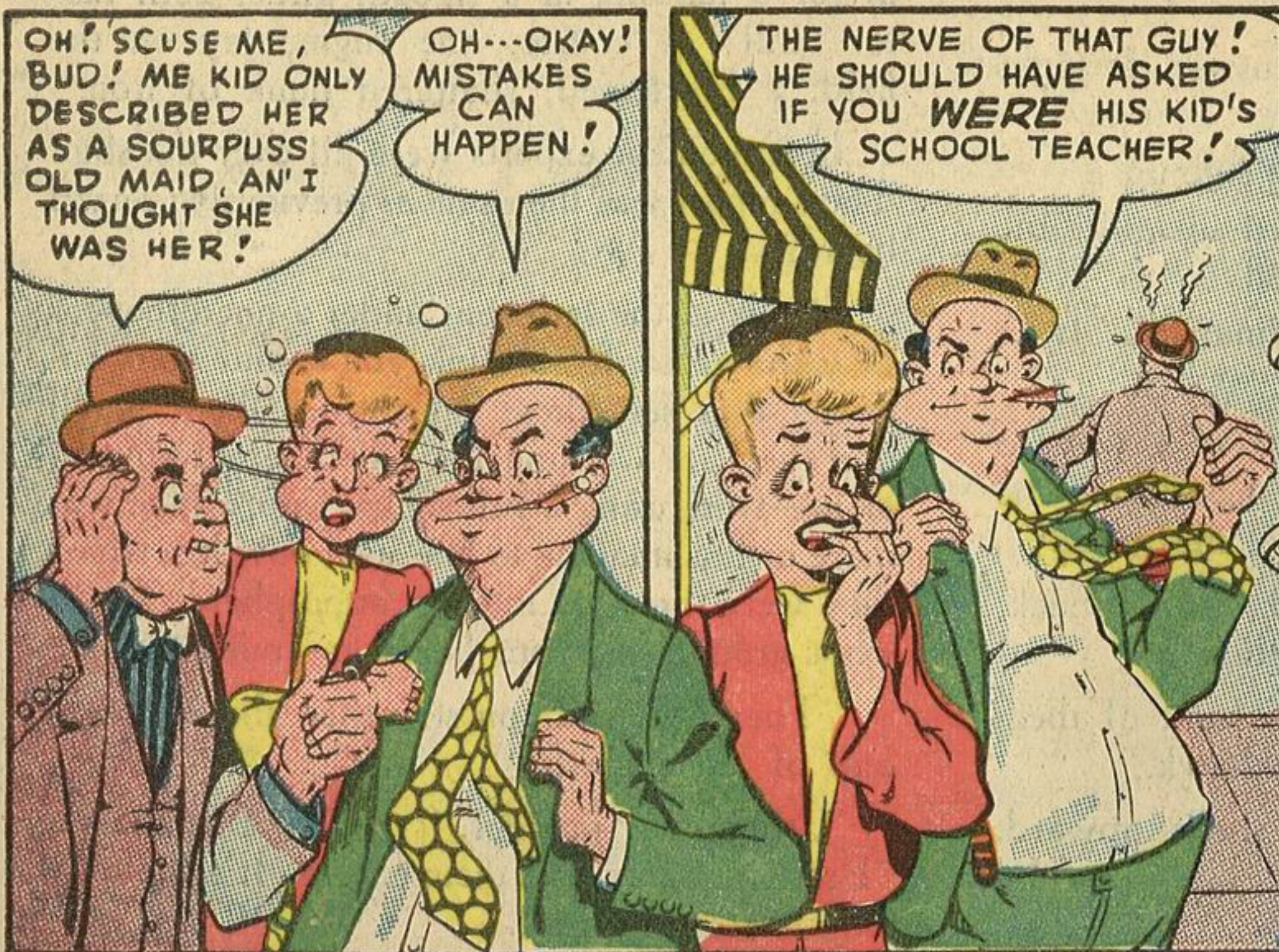
YOUR BRAIN'S FULL O' BARNACLES, JUG HEAD! MISS GISSEL **ISN'T** A SCHOOL TEACHER! AND IF I DIDN'T HAVE MY ARM IN A SLING, I'D BUST YOU ONE!

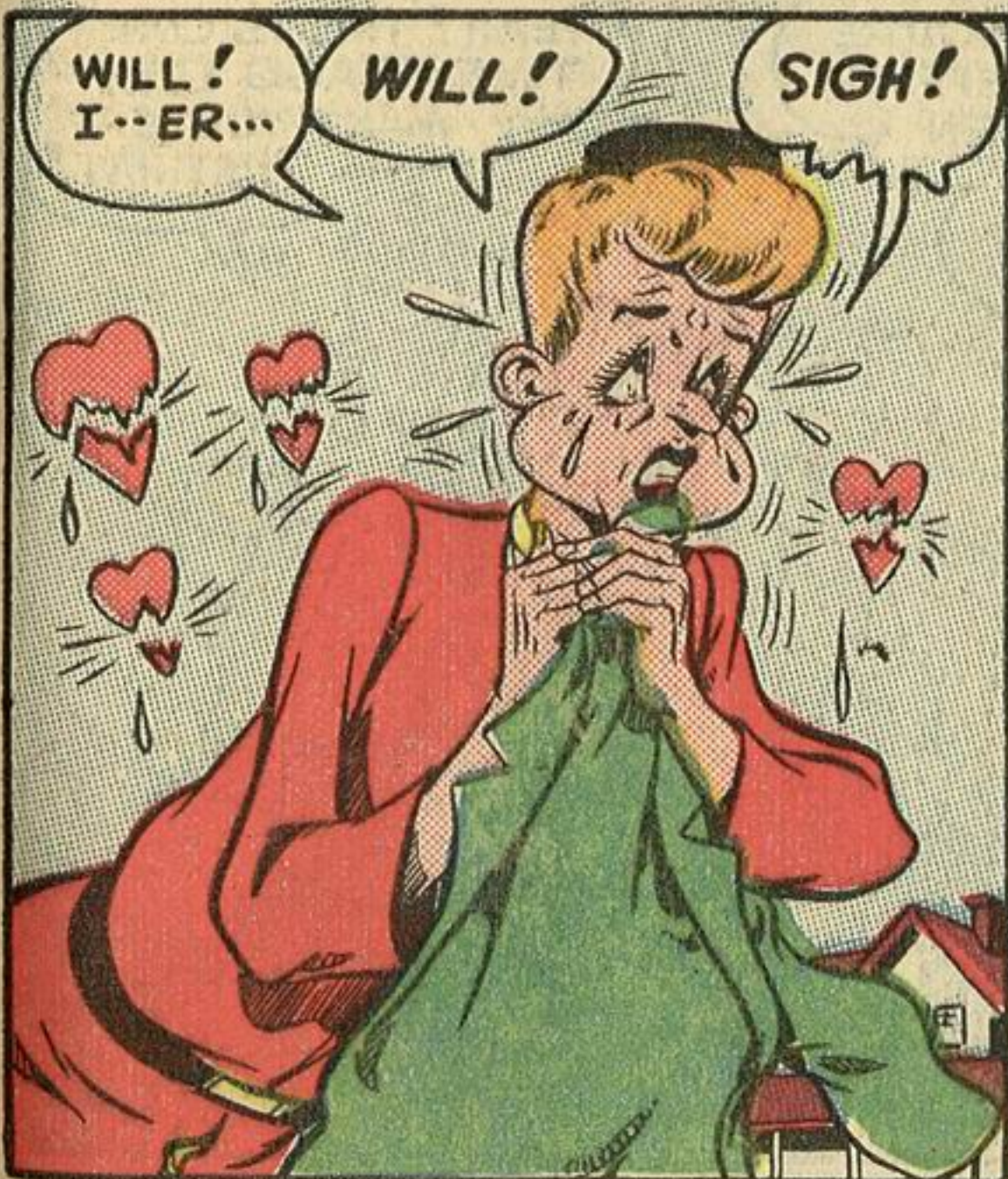
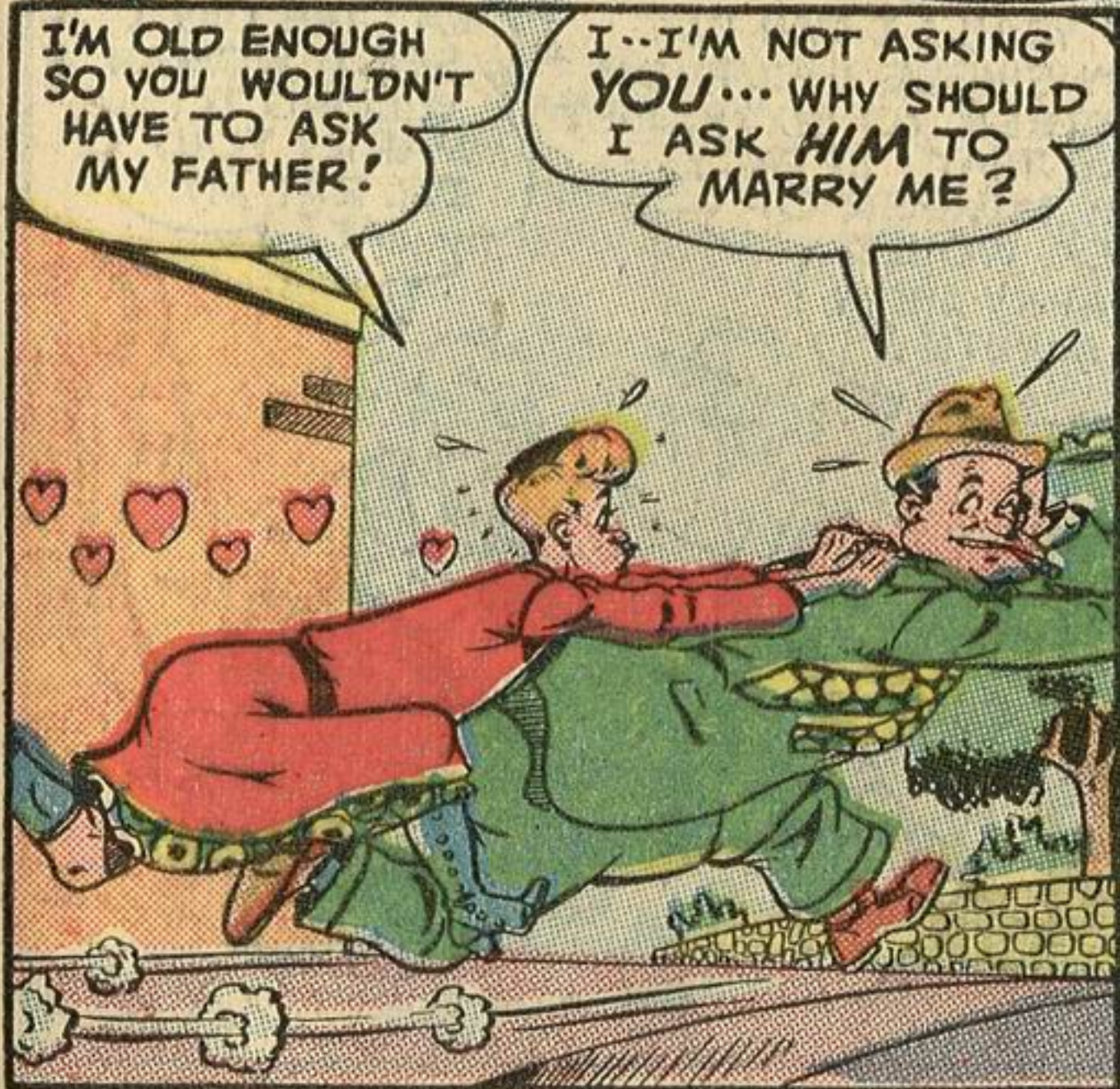


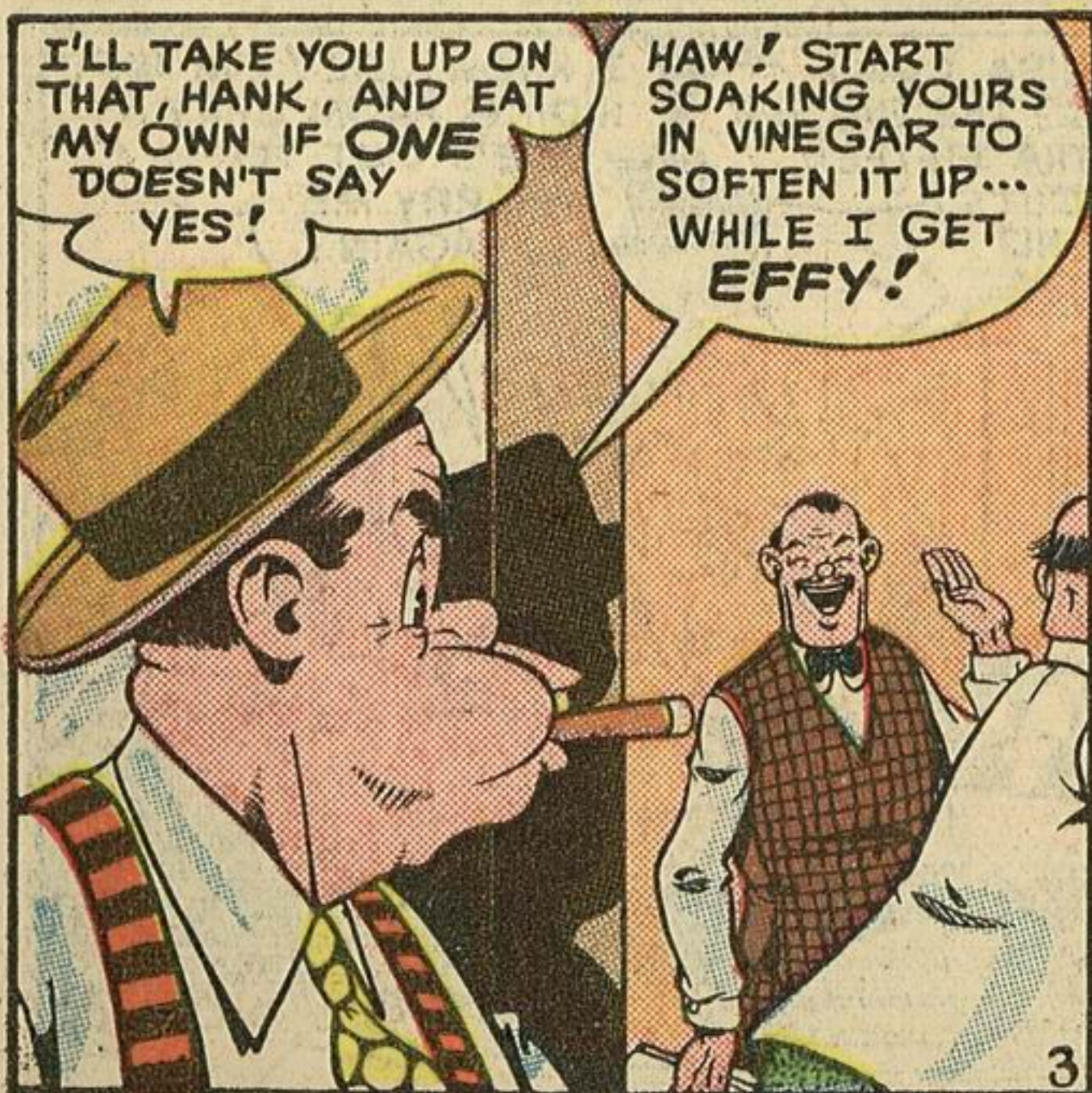
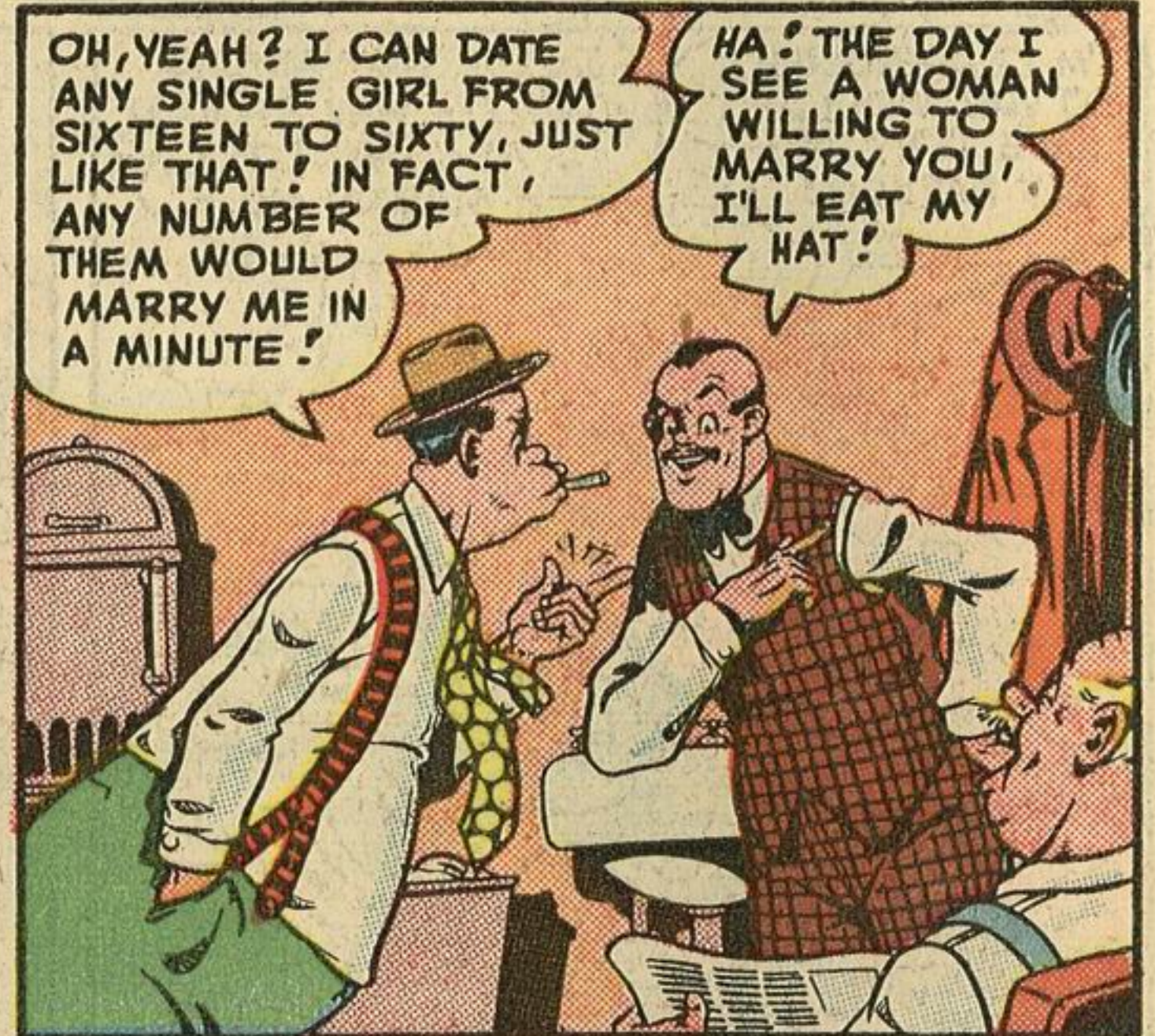
OH! SCUSE ME, BUD! ME KID ONLY DESCRIBED HER AS A SOURPUSS OLD MAID, AN' I THOUGHT SHE WAS HER!

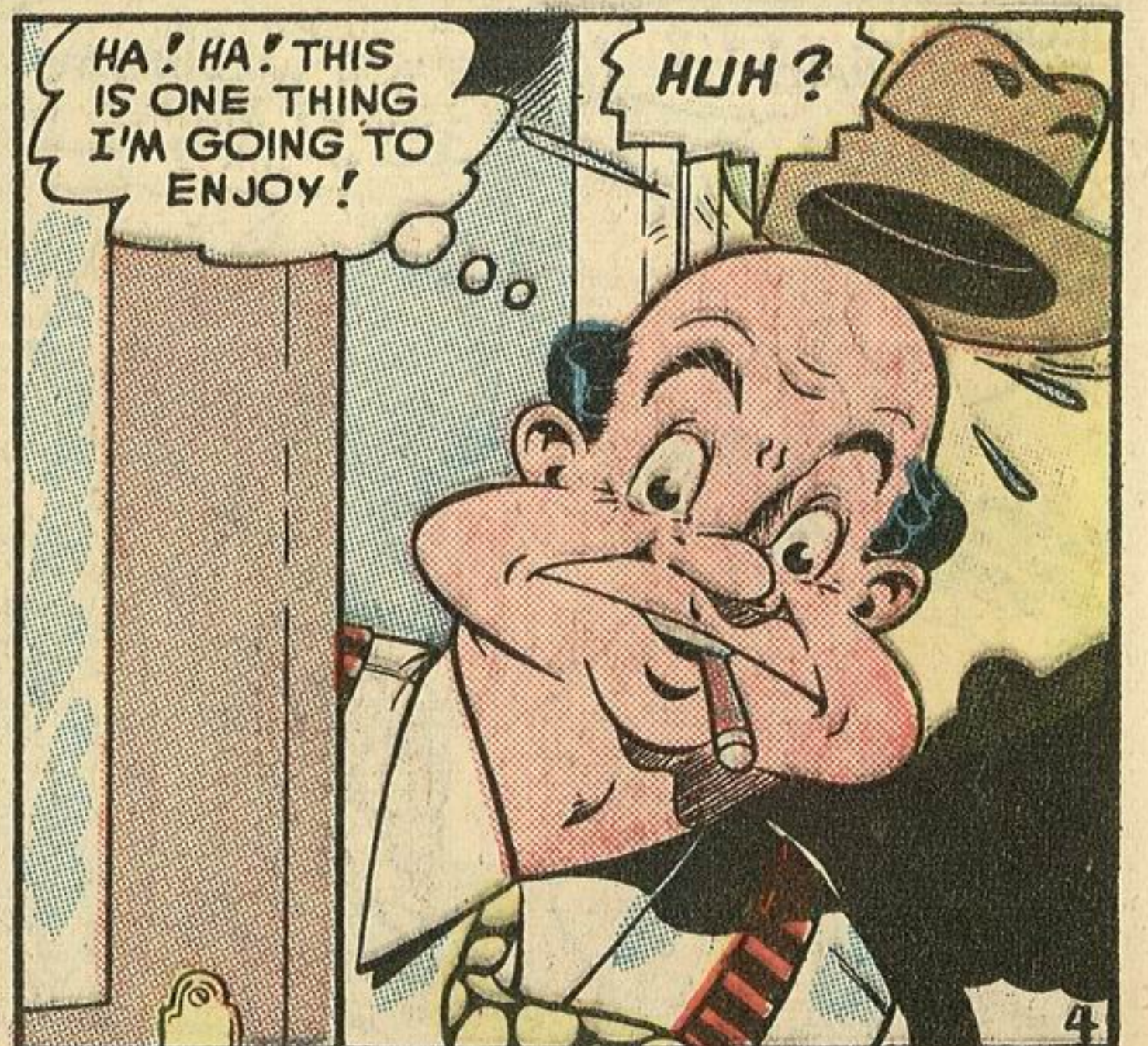
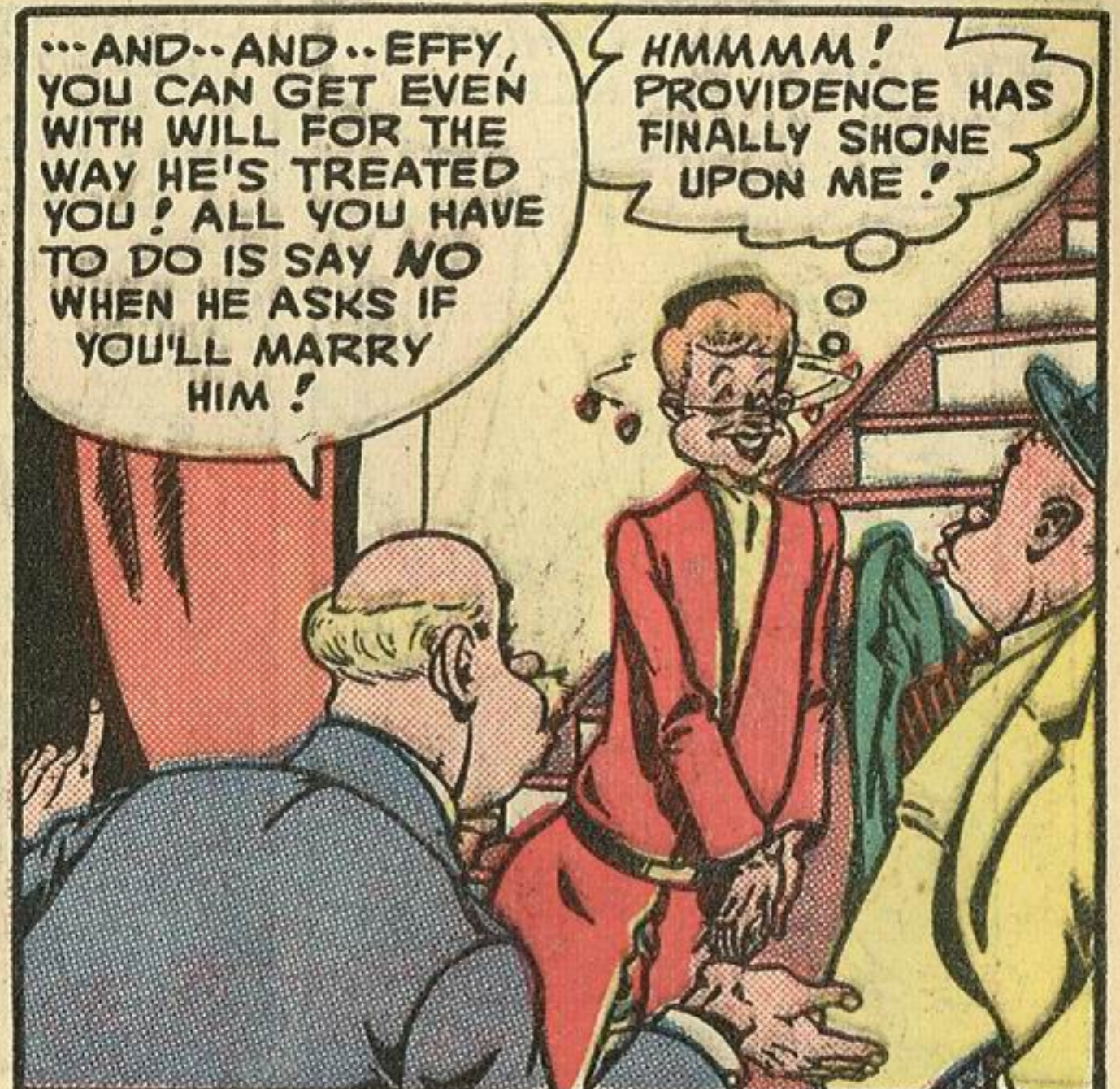
OH...OKAY! MISTAKES CAN HAPPEN!

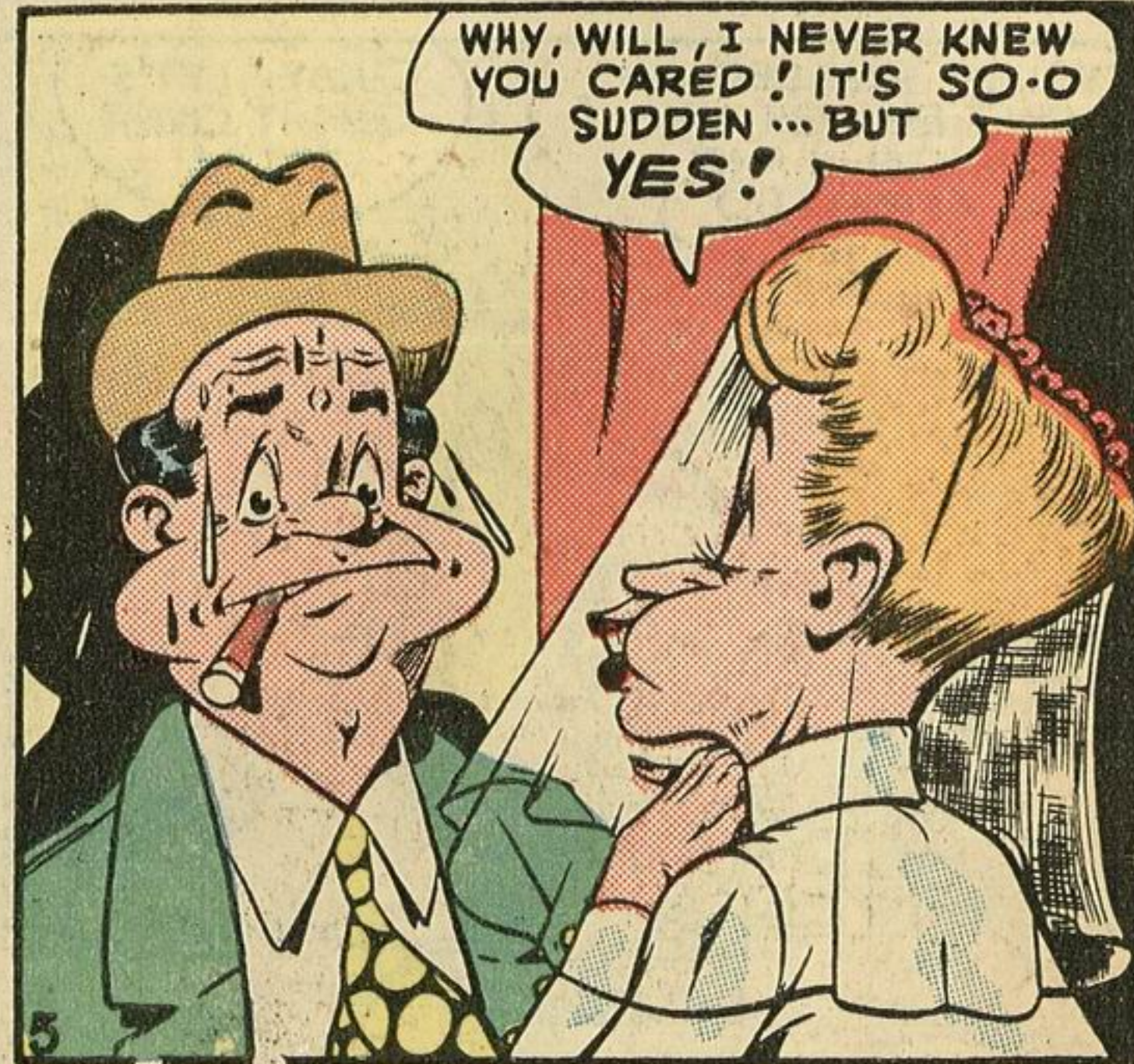
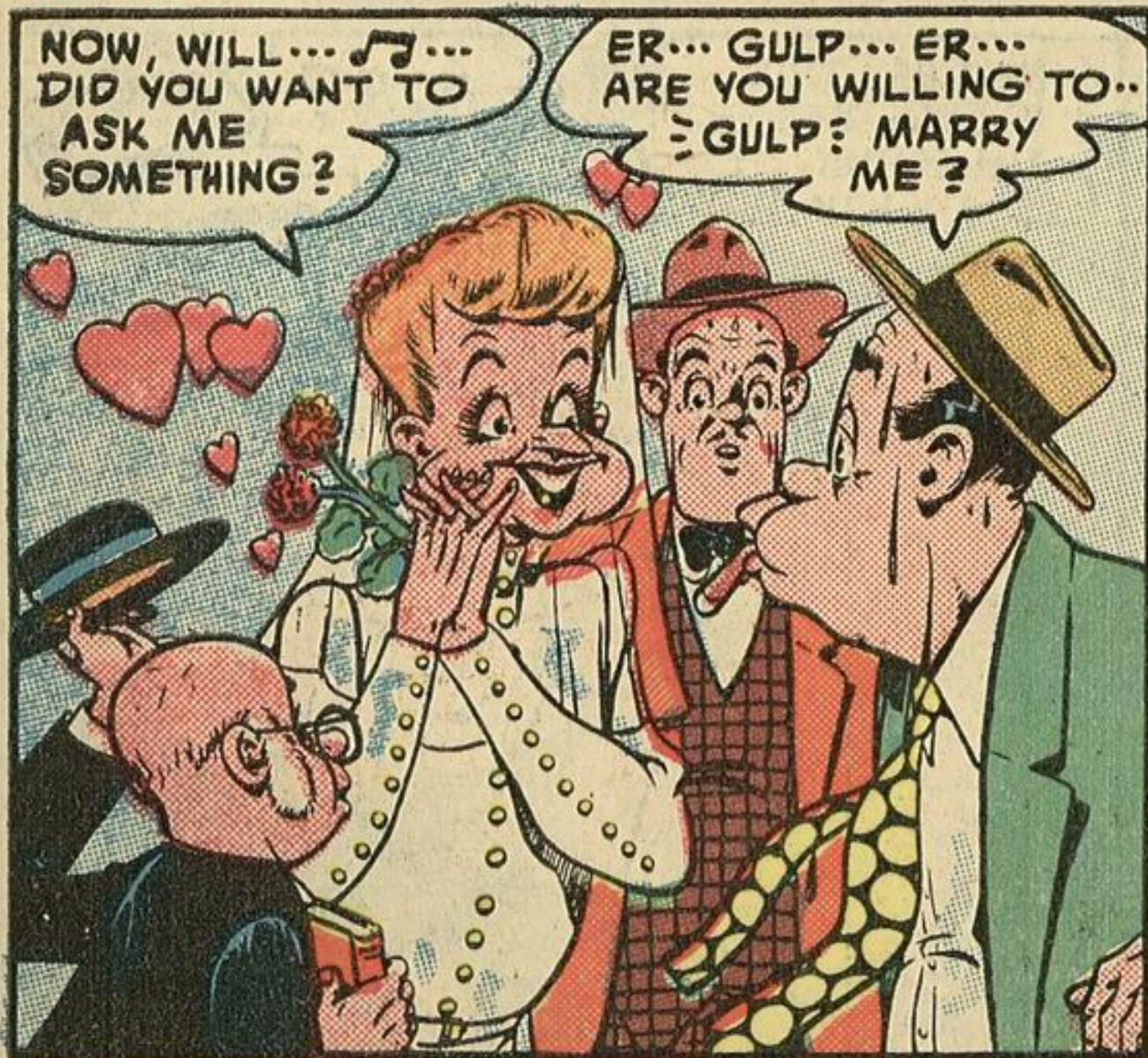
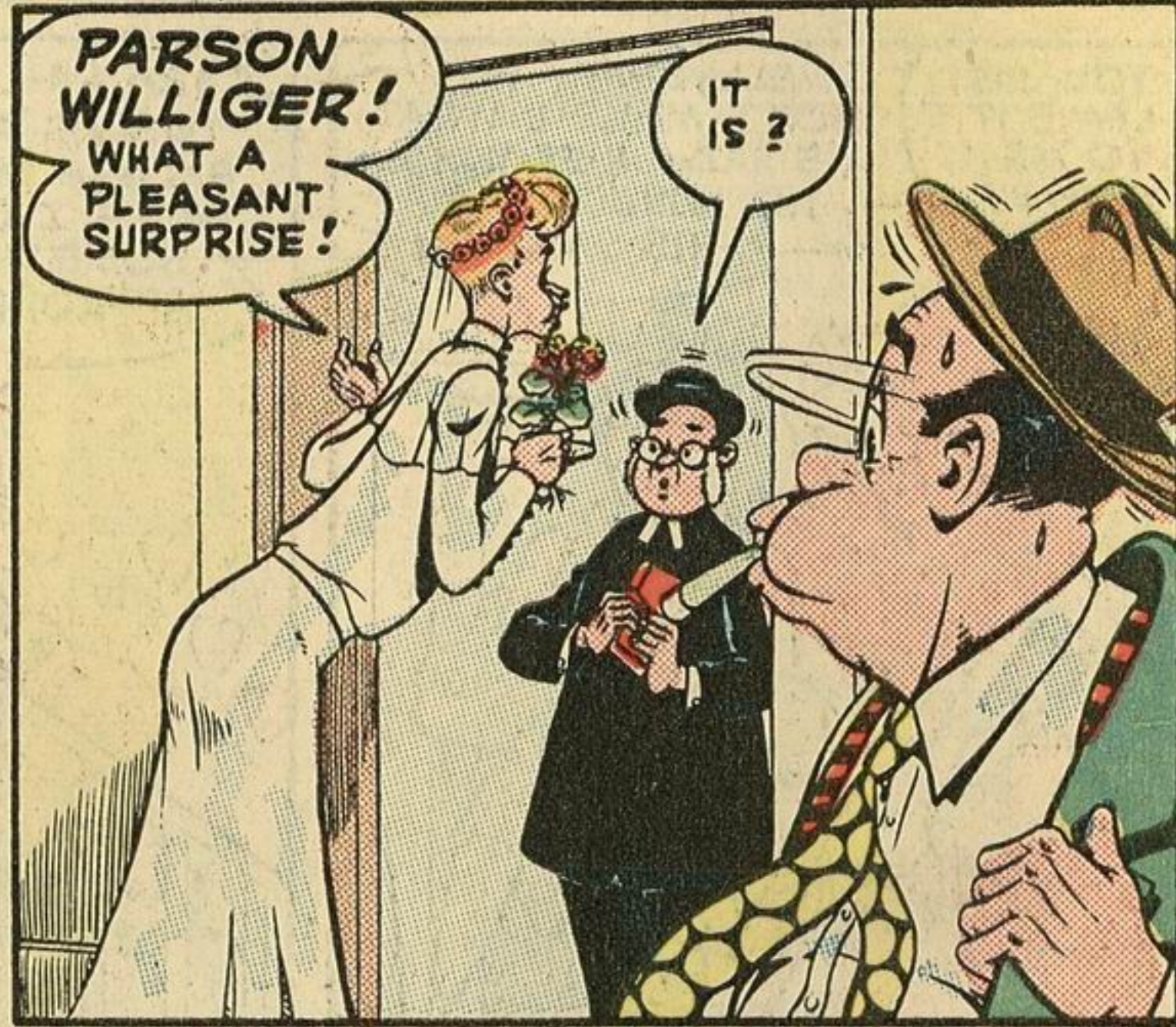
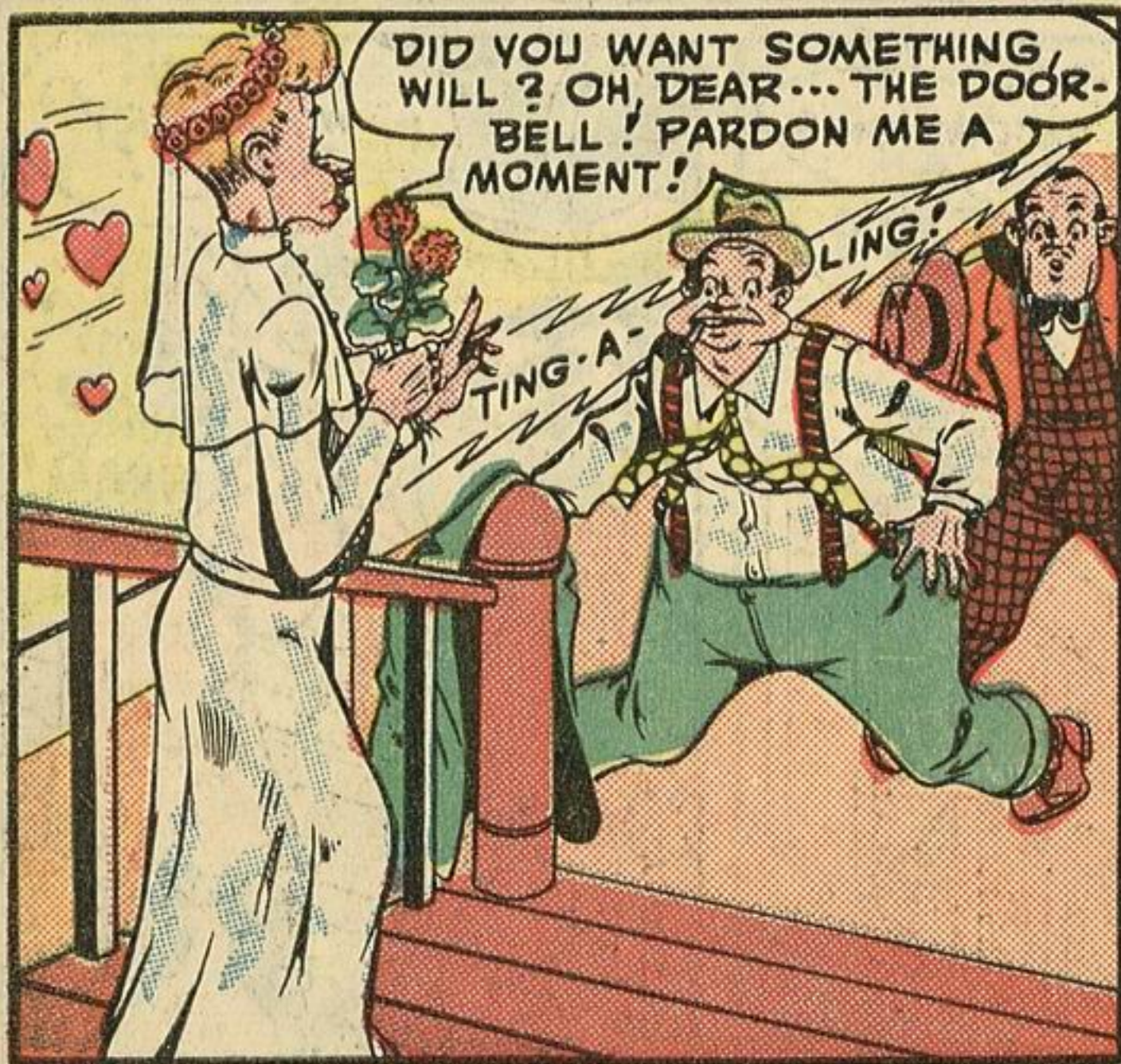
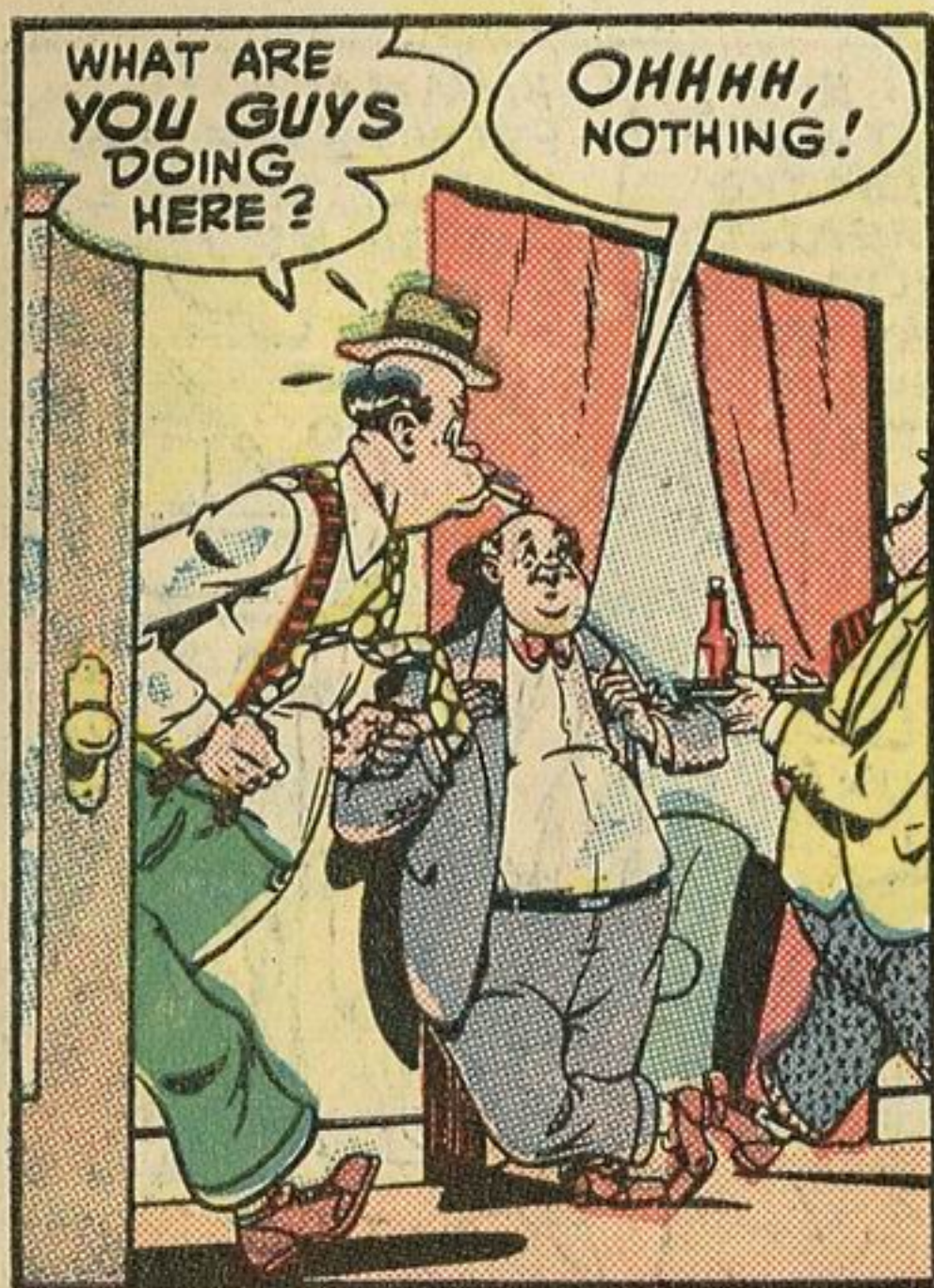
THE NERVE OF THAT GUY! HE SHOULD HAVE ASKED IF YOU **WERE** HIS KID'S SCHOOL TEACHER!

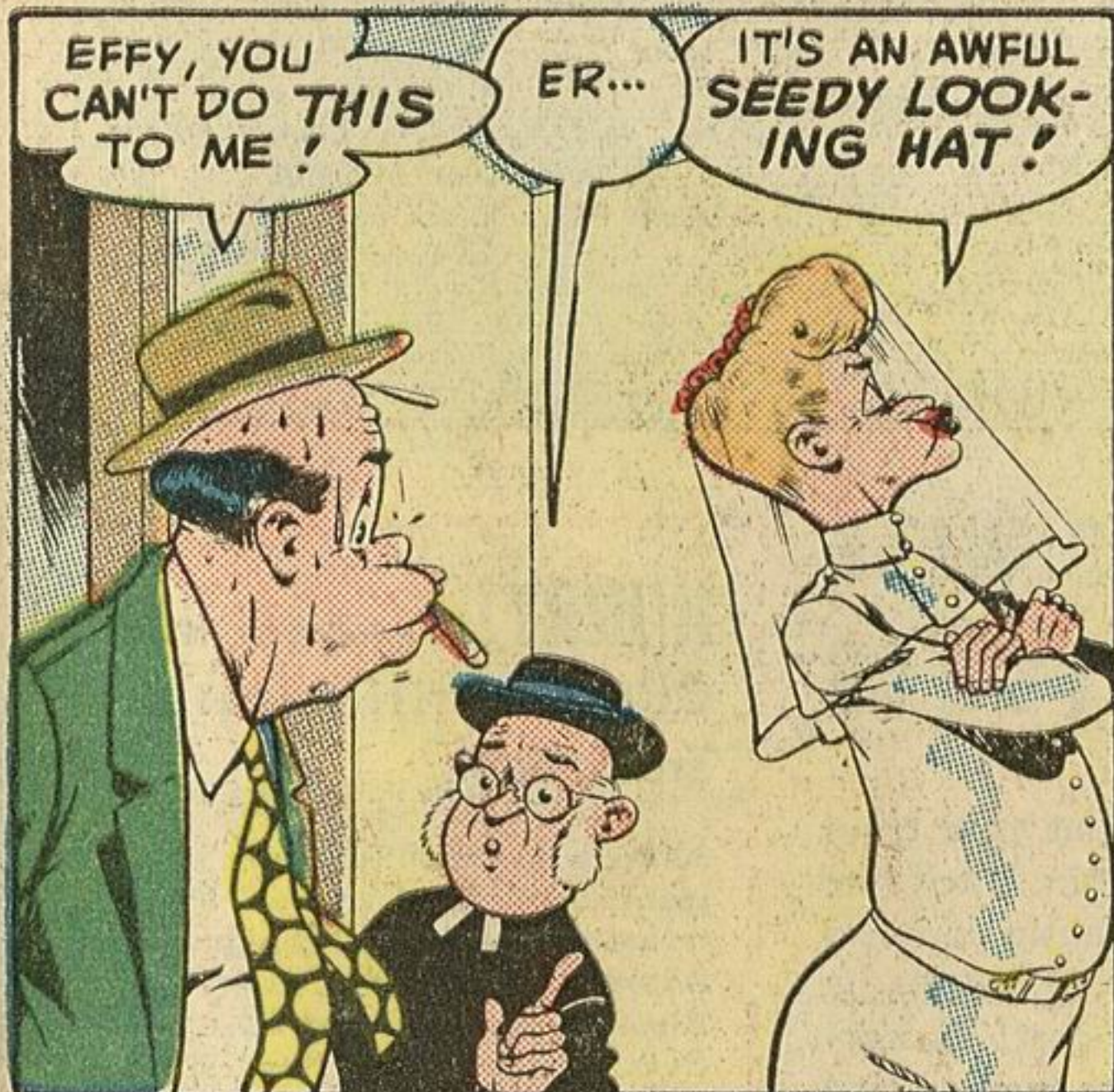
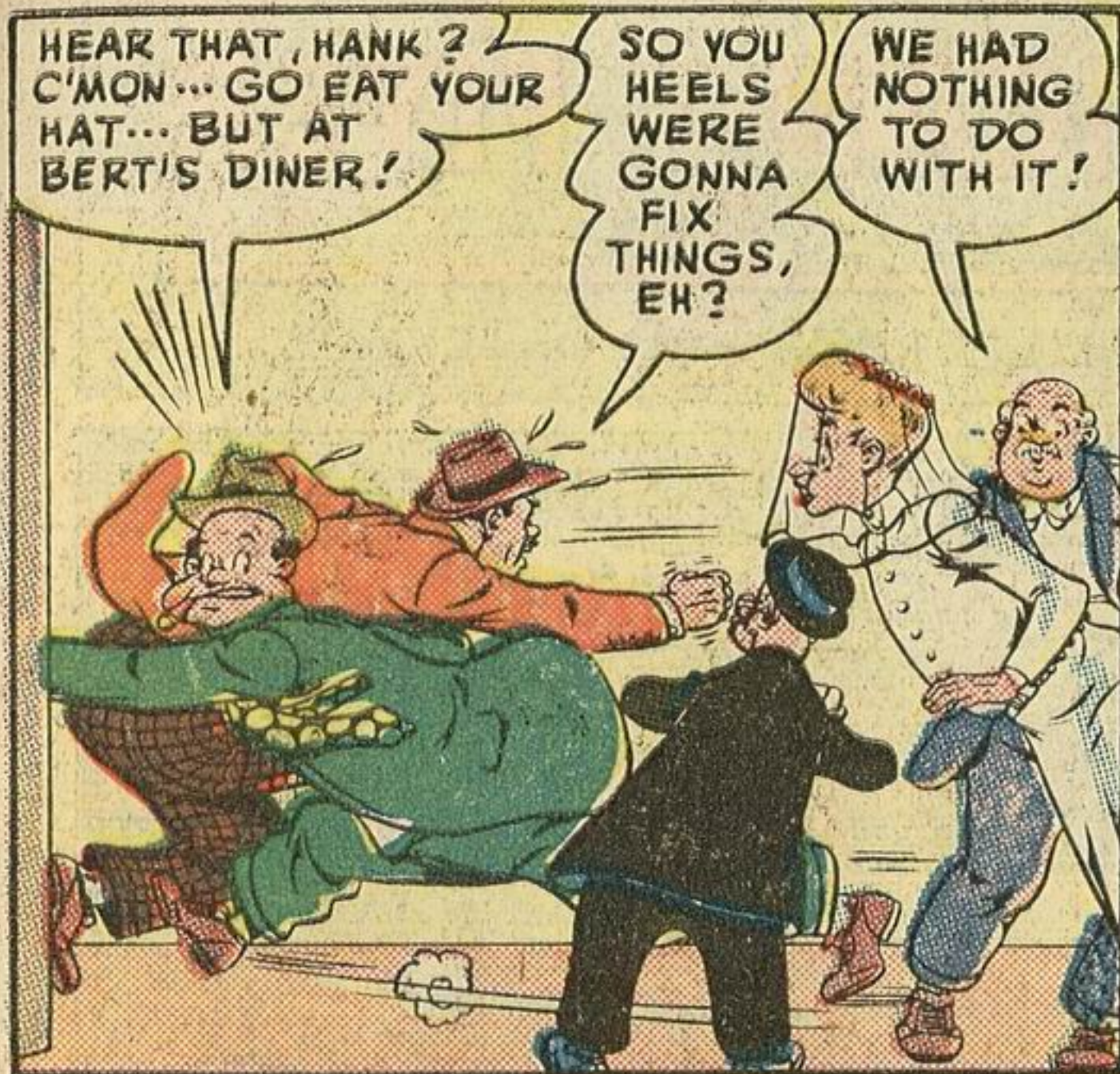


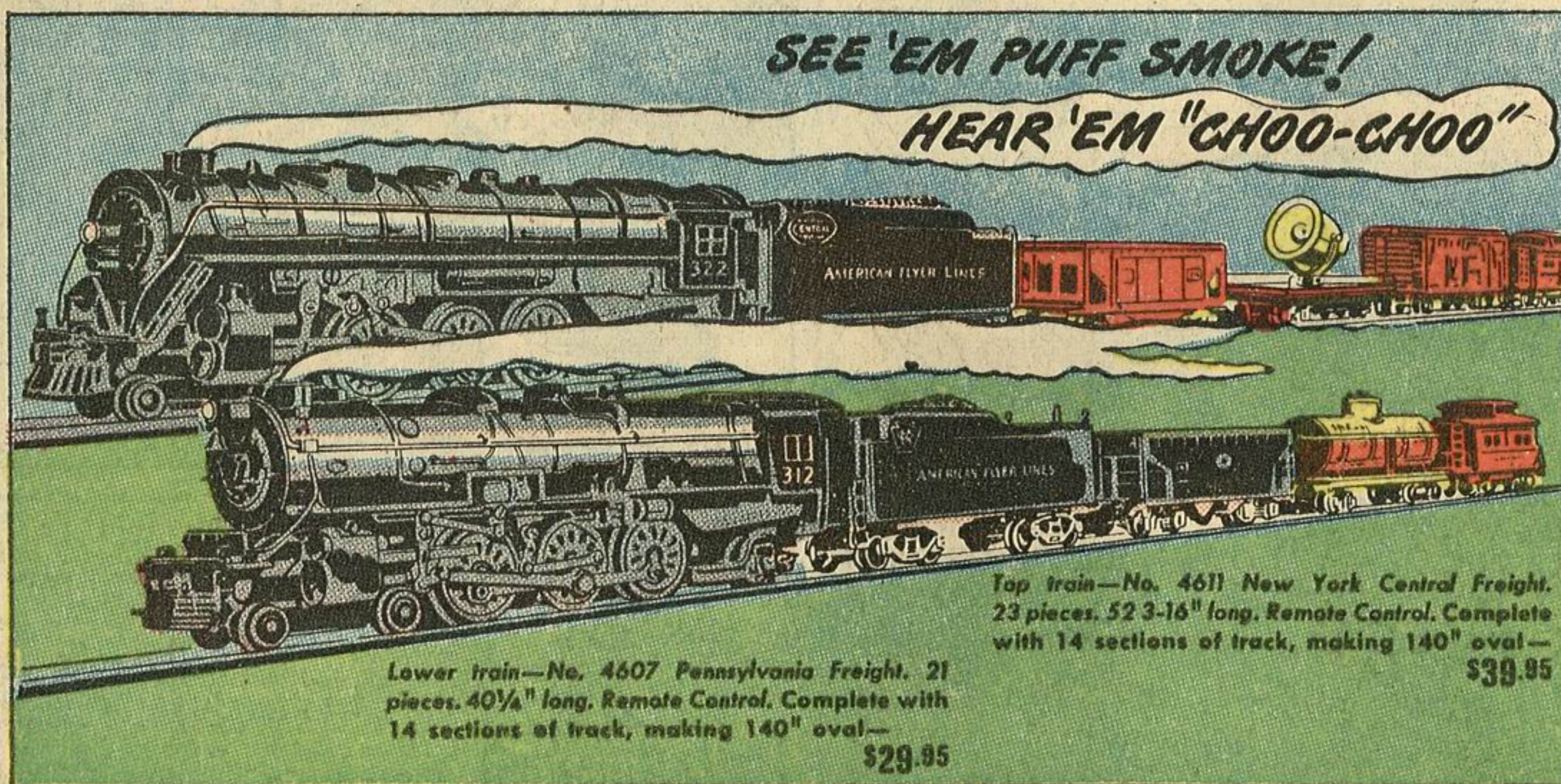










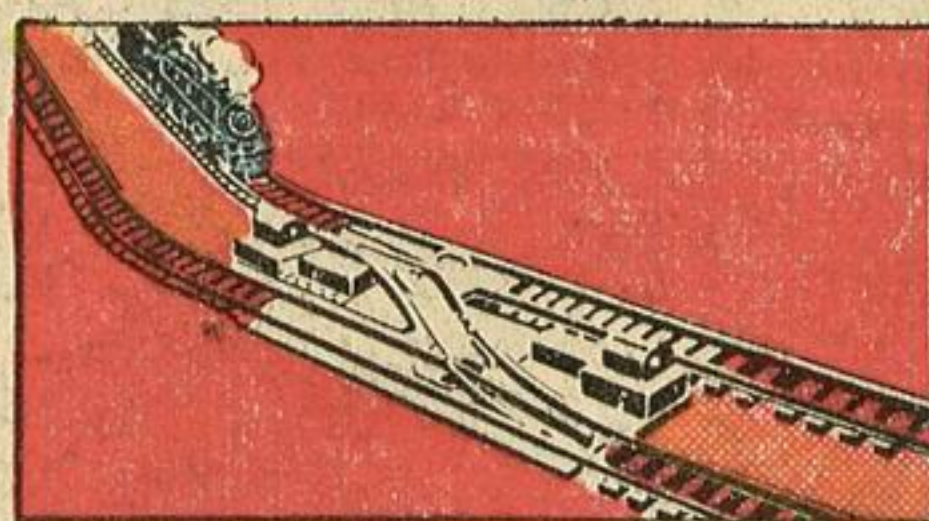


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